

SIXTEEN
DISCOURSES
UPON
DOCTRINES *and* DUTIES,
More peculiarly CHRISTIAN;
And against the
Reigning Vanities *of the* Age.

BY THE
Author of the Life of *DAVID*.



L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LIV.

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UPON

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43.

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Printed for John ...
and ...

MDCCLIV.

TO
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS,
THE
Princess Dowager of *Wales*.

MADAM,

IT is with equal Joy and
Gratitude, I embrace the
Honour indulged me, by so
great, and so illustrious a
Princess; of laying this Work
at your Feet. A Work,
which pretends to no Merit
in the Sight of GOD: And
but little, even in the Eyes
of

iv DEDICATION.

of a few humble Christians. Only this, that it is the Work of a Man, who hath employed many Years of a Life, now almost exhausted, in inculcating the Duties, and defending the Doctrines, taught by our blessed Saviour; with an honest, and an humble Zeal. Those Duties, which Your Life most effectually preacheth, and Your Manners, and Example, so gloriously adorn, illustrate, and recommend.

It is Your Glory, Madam, to have added a new Lustre to Royalty: and to have added new Honour, to that truly illustrious Family, into which,
you

DEDICATION. V

you are affianced; by the only Ornaments, and Excellencies, that could have made that Addition: Exalted Piety, and exemplary Virtue. To these, Madam, not Your high Birth, and Quality, are these Discourses humbly inscribed.

To be humble without Abasement, and to condescend with Dignity; are Accomplishments, truly princely; And your Acceptance of this humble Work, in the Manner you have condescended to do, is an additional Proof, of those rare Accomplishments, for which, You, Madam, have ever been so justly distinguished; and so highly honoured.

vi DEDICATION.

These which would in the Estimation of the World, constitute the highest, and most amiable Character in other Princes, how glorious is it, to behold them in your Royal Highness, but secondary Accomplishments!

May I add, that did my Talents enable, or my natural Turn, incline me to Panegyric; (or could I dare to presume it would be pardonable) I am now too old, and too mortified to the World, to indulge either: And therefore, I most humbly beg leave, to conclude, rather with a Monition; which however it might ill become some other
Cha-

DEDICATION. vii

Characters, will, I trust, in your christian Humility, be pardonable, in a Man of my Profession, and Years.

The Hopes, of more than one great Nation, next to their Dependence upon GOD, and your Royal Father, (whom GOD long preserve) rest firm upon your Royal Highness: Their Hopes of every Thing most truly valuable in this World; the Preservation of their Peace, their Liberty, their Religion; the true Love, and Interest of all which, Your Piety, Your Prudence, Your Wisdom, will inculcate, and fix deep in the Hearts of Your princely Family.

viii DEDICATION.

How great, and glorious
are the Hopes You sustain, and
how few are equal to the
Weight! GOD, in his infinite
Goodness, enable you to sustain
it as you ought: And as the
World confides you will.
Good GOD! How great is
your Task, and how happy
your Prospect! To act, not
only in the Character of a
tender, a prudent, and a pi-
ous Parent; but in that also,
of a guardian Angel, to a
Royal Race: To propagate
Piety, Prudence, Virtues,
and Accomplishments of eve-
ry Kind, to a late Posterity:
And through them, to man-
kind.

That

DEDICATION. ix

That the King of Kings,
will direct, support, and bless
you, in this great, and glo-
rious Work ; shall be the
constant Prayer of,

MADAM,

Your Royal Highness's,

Most dutiful,

Most humble, and

Most obedient Servant,

Patrick Delany.

DEDICATION. ix

Let the King of Kings
will direct, support, and bless
you in this great, and glo-
rious work, shall be the
constant prayer of

Yours in Christ, J. H. W.

Yours in Christ, J. H. W.

Yours in Christ, J. H. W.

Yours in Christ, J. H. W.

PREFACE.

THE church of God is a fortress that will be for ever furiously assaulted, and for ever successfully defended. The experience of all ages hath taught us, that no sooner will one set of assailants be repulsed, and defeated, but another will rise up in their room; to renew the shameless assault; till they also, are repelled, and overthrown; and share the disgrace, and infamy, of their predecessors.

This is the condition of the church militant here on earth: and every member of it, is to bear his part in the defence, according to the opportunities afforded and the abilities bestowed upon him; some in higher, and
more

more dignified characters ; and others, in lower ; but the obligation to defence equal in all. Nor must their aid and endeavours of defence be despised, even in the lowest class. And I believe it will be found upon inquiry, that this great city of God, hath been sometimes, remarkably defended, like the little city in Solomon's Ecclesiastes, by the wisdom of a poor man ; who fared here, as he did there, his person neglected, and his wisdom forgotten. Happy for the christian soldier, that the rewards of his warfare, are like the weapons of it, not carnal. And that his endeavours, in the defence of true religion, are less rewarded with the wages of vanity, than those of men of equal abilities, in almost any other character, profession, or pursuit in the world : and consequently that such rewards can less be numbered among his motives to that great duty. The highest honour, and advantage he can possibly attain, or should wish for in this world,

P R E F A C E. xi

world, (happy who can attain them) is to be enabled, to glory with St. Paul, that he hath fought a good fight, he hath finished his course, he hath kept the faith.

We might carry the figure further, and very justly complain, not only of open assaults, but also of secret minings and sappings of foundations, that is, in plain language, wily workings, and machinations, to delude and undo, both the religious principles, and morals of men; if not by new vices, at least by new modes, and combinations of vice; hid under specious appearances; and recommended, by gay, inviting delusions: and these like new diseases, or new symptoms of the same disease; call loudly for new medicines, and methods of cure; or at least new ingredients, adjustments, and compositions of the old.

The present reigning train of delusions, whereby multitudes are undone; is a circle of vain amusements, either
never

xiv P R E F A C E.

never ending, or ending in itself: which call off the mind, from every serious, and of consequence, every useful and honourable pursuit in life. As if they reasoned with themselves (but not aright) in the language, wherewith, the wise man reproveth the reigning follies of his time, in the ministers, and preachers, of similar vanities. Our life (say they) is short, and tedious (strange composition; but a true character of the voluptuary's life) come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth; let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rose buds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness. And to crown all, they conclude in the words, which Isaiah puts into the mouths of the most degenerated and abandoned reprobates.

And

P R E F A C E. xv

And to-morrow shall be as this day,
and much more abundant.

The mind taken off from useful pursuits, naturally becometh the prey of such, as are vain and idle: and it is then in the condition of uncultivated ground: and will as easily become the habitation of the worst vices, as that doth of the worst weeds.

And shall the ministers of true religion look silently and calmly on, and see mankind carried about in this circle of vain amusements, which cannot fail in the end, to be a whirlpool of sure destruction! if they did so, should they not justly incur that bitter reproach of the prophet, Isaiah lvi. blind, and ignorant watchmen; dumb dogs that cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber.

Should we not therefore, diligently, and zealously, lay hold of every occasion, and advantage, to promote the great purpose of our profession?
and

and as we should be attentive to every other aid, which it hath pleased God to afford, to the champions of his blessed son, in the christian cause; we should be particularly attentive, to all the aid, and light, that learning, either ancient, or modern, can afford, to this end; well remembering, that nobly informing, and even preceptive observation of our blessed Saviour in the xiiith chapt. of St. Matthew, ver. 52, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old. And among these, he should be careful, not to overlook those remarkable discoveries in natural philosophy, which seem providentially reserved, for the humiliation of an insolent infidel age; exhibiting to their eyes, much stranger, and more amazing mysteries, in the several experiments, and examples of electricity, and the polypus, than
any

any articles of belief in the christian faith.

But it is objected to writings of this kind, that they are too numerous, that the world is already crouded, and cloyed with them.

The answer is obvious : it is the interest of unbelievers to cry out against, in order to lessen the number, and take off the edge, of their ablest, and most determined antagonists : but surely, the defences of christianity should bear some proportion, to the assaults made upon it. And it is one of the great advantages derived to the world, from the frequency, and fury of these assaults ; that they have created, (at least called forth) a great number, and variety, of new, and noble defences. And there is this obvious and natural apology for the great number of authors ; who have employed themselves to this end, that there are few, if any of them, who have not produced something of importance

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to the cause they defend. And whereas, the efforts of the very ablest among them (from the disadvantage of a short lined language, and a giddy, unattentive age) rarely extend very far. That defect, is, in a good measure supplied by the variety of styles, and reasonings, and characters of writers, suited to as great a variety of capacities, and tastes in the readers.

The author of these discourses, is not without hope, that he hath a right to urge this apology for himself, in common with his fellow soldiers, in the cause of Christ, at least, he hath fully satisfied himself, that he hath brought some new defences to the cause, in which he is engaged: unanswerable, and not unimportant; nor would he otherwise dare, as with earnest, and incessant humility he doth, to implore the divine blessing upon his endeavours, in proportion to the fidelity, and integrity of his intentions.

There is also another apology, which may truly be urged, in behalf of
writers

P R E F A C E. xix

writers upon sacred subjects; which, duly attended to, may possibly have more weight with many readers: and that is, that upon a full and candid inquiry they will be found, if not the best improvers, yet undoubtedly the most faithful guardians of the English language. And for this plain reason, that those who have defended the cause they undertook, in the most masterly manner; have most diligently, and constantly perused, and consequently formed their style, in a good measure upon the sacred writings: into which, the distinguished elegance, and flowing beauties of the Greek language, being transfused in the translation; together, with the spirit, dignity, and nervous force of the Hebrew; have made the English Bible, the truest, and richest treasury of strength, purity, politeness, and the true sublime, that ever adorned, and enriched any language. As on the other hand, they whose souls have

a 2 been

been warped from the rectitude, and their hearts estranged, from the purity of true religion, and the beauty of holiness, will be found proportionably impaired, in the powers of the mind; and for a reason sufficiently obvious: the business of religion is, to refine, to exalt, and to ennoble: the business of irreligion is, to debase and to deprave, to debase men to brutes, and to deprave them into fiends. And our style will always sink with our sentiments, and equally swerve from beauty, and excellence of every kind: and for this, I appeal to a late work, of a most hardened veteran in the cause of satan, upon the study of history: in which, if any man can find one position well argued, one noble sentiment or one single paragraph, or even period, truly elegant, well turned, or in any sense finely written, I easily allow him a sagacity, very superior to mine.

And this hints a plain, and (upon his own principles) a well grounded reason,

P R E F A C E. XXI

reason, why this author villifies, two of the noblest writers, that ever enlightened, or adorned the earth, Moses, and St. Paul; for while they live, are understood, and honoured, he will be proportionably detested, and despised; till his works are numbered among other, the fleeting vanities of this world: happy could his immortal soul be so accounted of!

This also grounds a reason, why the learned languages are so decried; because, when they cease, the knowledge of scripture, and with that, the strength, and beauty of the English style, will cease too; and the understanding and language of the believer will be brought down nearer to the infidel's level. Were we once deprived of this knowledge, we might naturally expect to see the English tongue as much disgraced by gaudy tinsel, and foreign barbarisms, and consequently as alien from its genuine plainness, simplicity,

simplicity, and strength, as our dress, and buildings, ornaments, and utensils of every kind: the beauty, and simplicity of which, and in some even their main use, are overwhelmed, oppressed, and almost totally lost, in crowded, impertinent, and more than Gothic ornaments.

And therefore, among the other requisites to form the character of a good preacher, the care of style must by no means be overlooked; at least so far, as not to render it plain, manly, simply elegant, and unbiassing: the reasoning, always clear; and if possible, confirmed by truths, divinely inspired; and concluding in them: thus supported, they will claim at once, the beauty, dignity, and strength, of pillars of marble, upon sockets of fine gold.

Nor were the advantages of a studied, and beautiful style, neglected, even by the greatest preacher of righteousness in this world, prior to him
that

that saved it : I mean Solomon : who hath left us this account of himself, when he applied his best abilities to instruct mankind.

Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge ; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs : the preacher sought to find acceptable * words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. *Eccles. xii.*

Hence we clearly learn, that Solomon, with all his superior abilities ; confided not so far in them, as to take upon him to instruct mankind by extemporary, and unstudied effusions, even of the highest earthly wisdom : but studied, composed, and adjusted his discourses, his periods, and even particular expressions, with the greatest care and attention.

Here then behold, the highest, and noblest earthly example, set to all suc-

* In the original words of delight.

ceeding preachers of true religion. And certainly, it should be matter of solid consolation to all men of that character (amidst all the revilings, of ignorant, proud, profane, and pitiable scorners) that theirs began, where Solomon's ended. He set out a prince, he reigned a magnificent monarch; encompassed, and adorned, with all earthly glories: and he concluded, a preacher of truth and righteousness.

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you rest:*

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of
me, for I am meek and lowly in
heart; and ye shall find rest unto
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*Be not conformed to this world, but
be ye transformed, by the renewing
of your mind, that ye may prove
what is that good, and acceptable,
and perfect will of God*

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Humility recommended principally
: from the Example of Jesus Christ.

St. Matthew, Chap. xi. Ver. 28, 29.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour, and
are heavy laden, and I will give
you rest :*

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of
me, for I am meek and lowly in
heart : and ye shall find rest unto
your souls.*

TO have a thorough under-
standing of these words, we
must consider our blessed
Saviour as then (at the time of pro-
nouncing them) contemplating up-
on the vanity and misery of the hu-
man life ; the whole world in pro-
spect,

2 *Humility recommended from*

spect, and the miserable race of mankind traversing this little ball of earth in an infinite variety of busy and vain pursuits ; hurry and bustle in their motions ; and ten thousand different distractions in their hearts and looks ; jostling and scrambling for toys and trifles ; insensible to every thing in their power, and grasping incessantly at something out of reach ; ravaging and destroying every thing that interrupts their progress to the point in view ; and tearing their hearts if any other out-go them in the pursuit ; struggling under all the calamities that befall them, and in terror of ten thousand that never will happen ; inflaming every present evil with impatience under it, and at the same time reaching eagerly after many more, which providence in pity removes from them ; some fainting under an unwieldy weight of wealth and honour, and yet labouring and drudging for more ; others not less
3 oppressed

the Example of Jesus Christ. 3

Oppressed with loads of guilt, in perpetual horror of the divine wrath and vengeance too justly due, and yet incessantly urged on to new enormities; applying for relief to senseless superstitions and painful follies, of no efficacy to reform their lives, or appease the Deity: others swelling immeasurably upon imaginary advantages, and perfections that do not belong to them; loudly vaunting exploits they never achieved, or should blush to own: and lastly, all of them reaching eagerly after a phantom of happiness, that wearies their pursuit, and deludes their grasp.

And surely the world in this prospect is a subject of the most moving and mournful contemplation, that can possibly enter into the heart of man. It is no wonder then, if our compassionate Saviour, considering it in this view, should cry out in pity to the wretched race of mortals,

4 *Humility recommended from*

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Take my yoke upon you, saith our blessed Saviour: such is the weakness and corruption of human nature, that an unbounded freedom would destroy us; and therefore it is absolutely necessary we should be under some restraint. We are born to subjection; and whether we will become servants to GOD, and subject ourselves to the yoke of Christ, that is, to the wise and easy restraints of true religion; or continue slaves to the folly and tyranny of our own passions and appetites? That is the choice. And in order to determine us in it, our blessed Saviour exhorteth all mankind to learn of him: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Learn of Jesus Christ* the

the Example of Jesus Christ. 5

the vanity and vexation of those trifles ye contend for; learn of him the toil of that pride and ambition, that envy and avarice, that wrath and revenge, which distract your souls; and instead of those follies and vices that disquiet and torment you, study meekness and humility after his example, and so *shall ye find rest unto your souls.*

Learn of me, (saith our blessed Saviour) and very justly, with very great and peculiar propriety: it was a lecture of philosophy until then unknown to the world: humility was a virtue that had not so much as a name before christianity.

Aristotle doth indeed mention a mediocrity about honour, (which is nearer allied to contentment than humility) but even this he calls a *nameless virtue*, and seems to have no sense of any great worth or excellence in it.

6 *Humility recommended from*

Besides, supposing it had been known to the world before our blessed Saviour, yet it is certain no mortal, no mere mortal, was fitted to teach it in perfection: that strange mixture of vanity and conceit in our composition makes this a lesson, that comes ill recommended from the most perfect of our race. And therefore it was a doctrine and a discovery reserved for, and peculiarly adapted to, the character and condition of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who not only humbled himself to the meanness of our nature, but vouchsafed to assume one of the lowest and most abject conditions of life, to teach us perfect humility in all its parts and circumstances. And therefore in discoursing of this virtue, I shall chiefly recommend it to you, from the example of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And in order to treat of it with more clearness and distinction, I shall

first

the Example of Jesus Christ. 7

first explain it, and then consider the duty in these three relations, as it regards ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and our Creator.

To begin then;

Humility is a virtue, which will be best understood, by considering it, as a principle directly opposite to pride: it is a virtue, wisely appointed by Almighty God, as a counterpoise to self-love, and that self-sufficiency which results from it: it is a virtue, which teacheth us to think justly, that is, meanly, or to speak more properly, it teaches us to think neither vainly nor vauntingly of ourselves, and our endowments; and to do right to the rest of mankind on the same score, praising and preferring upon the comparison, as reason and truth require. It is a virtue that subdueth the haughty heart to the divine dispensations; concluding from clear and candid reflections upon the wisdom and goodness of

8 *Humility recommended from*

GOD, and our own ignorance and insufficiency, that every condition of life assigned to us, every appointment of providence is the wisest and best that could be made; and is, at least, good enough for creatures so vain and so worthless as we are.

And indeed the calls and incitements to this virtue, from the consideration of our own being and abilities, are so very strong and convincing, every part and circumstance of both, are such arguments for humiliation, that one would think, instead of wanting motives to it, we rather stood in perpetual need of consolation and relief, to support us under a too severe and abject sense of our condition. *Ob! why is dust and ashes proud?* A being so surrounded with evil on all sides; so subject to ten thousand calamities, to infirmities from within, and accidents from without; so mean in our original, so loathsome in our end; so short,

so

the Example of Jesus Christ. 9

so evanescent; derived from dust, and hastening to it again, by quick successions of pain and folly; so weak in infancy, so vain and so unruly in youth, so ambitious in manhood, so covetous, and almost entirely worthless, in age; the sport of succeeding passions; so insolent in prosperity, so depressed in poverty; so knowing in trifles, and so stupid to our true interest; so affectedly wise, and so really ignorant; so quick-sighted to the faults and follies of other men, and so blind to our own; so strong in reflection, so weak in passion; so short in our earthly duration, so endless in our earthly prospects; so giddy, so inconstant, so irresolute; so vain of rational liberty, and yet such very slaves to appetite; so eagerly desirous of temporary happiness, and so utterly incapable of attaining it.

And yet this being, such as it is, with all its real defects, and boasted

80 *Humility recommended from*
ed excellencies, derived, and dependent; utterly beyond our power to produce the least part or perfection belonging to it, or so much as to continue them in being for one moment. It is true indeed, the rational and immortal soul is in itself of great excellence; but then, whilst it is tied to the body, it is loaded with such a mixture of passion and imperfection, so much vice, and folly, and error, and ignorance hang upon it, that it is much more a subject of humiliation, than vanity. But supposing the glory of our frame to be perfect and accomplished, as when it came fresh from the hand of GOD, hath it after all, any other than the glory of a fine building, or a fine statue? it is the architect's and the statuary's praise; and not ours.

For who maketh thee, O man, to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if
60 *thou*

the Example of Jesus Christ. 11

thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

And here the example of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, shines out to us in an amazing manner. He had no infirmity either of body or mind; was subject to no danger or distress, other, than such as he himself chose to undergo for our sakes; perfectly skilled in all the secrets of art and nature, in all past and future events; and in all the ways and works of providence; and all this without any mixture of folly or error; good, in the most perfect and absolute sense of the word, without the least tincture of vice or imperfection; in a word, his being, independent; his power, almighty; his goodness, consummate; his wisdom, infinite; his duration, endless; and yet, with all these perfections, the humblest of the race of *Adam*; beyond all example, and beyond all expression. Wretches that we are!

12 *Humility recommended from*

is not this consideration enough to to make us blush to death for our vanity and folly?

Another argument for humility is taken from the relation we bear to our fellow-creatures. It is acknowledged, that all men are by nature equal; the laws of our production, existence, and continuance in the world, are exactly the same; the great and distinguishing rights of humanity we are all equally intitled to; and equally inherit its corruptions; we are all by nature equally the children of wrath; and by redemption, heirs of salvation; the same breath fills our nostrils; and the same blood runs in our veins; the same dust is our original, and our end. : What then hath the best and mightiest among us to vaunt of above his brethren? what indeed, but some trifling and accidental advantages, scarce worth the naming? perhaps some office or title of honour,

honour, some boast of power, or
pittance of wealth; or at best some
uncommon ability of body and mind.
Alas! do we not all know, that the
several orders and ranks of men are
indeed necessary to the well being
and government of society, but do
not any way affect our real merits?
all conditions of life, that equally
contribute to the welfare of the
world, are in the sight of God e-
qually honourable, as they are equal-
ly useful. For in reality nothing is
truly valuable, and consequently no-
thing is so in the eye of God and
of reason, but worth and excellence
of some kind or other; (that is)
such excellence as brings us into
some likeness of the divinity, and
renders us like him useful and be-
neficent: and yet that very likeness
should teach us humility; since that
most exalted and incomprehensible
being, great and excellent as he is,
yet humbleth himself to behold
the

24 *Humility recommended from*

the things that are in heaven and in earth. Humbleth himself to hear and relieve the meanest mortal that calleth upon him. Now the great business of life being to aspire after the similitude of God, it clearly follows that all imitations of his excellence, all aspirings after his perfections should be governed by that truly divine principle of doing good. It is evident then, that the higher degrees of wealth, wisdom, power, and pre-eminence, are more honourable, merely because they enable men to be more useful, and for no other reason: and therefore, a man of honour and affluence, a man of superior talents or abilities of any kind, who doth not employ them, to the great ends for which they were designed, the glory of God, and the good of mankind; is in truth the most despicable creature in the universe, because he is the most worthless. And if he per-

vert.

vert his abilities and endowments, to evil purposes, he is then so far from deserving esteem, that he is intitled to nothing but detestation; because he approacheth just so much nearer to the character of the devil. And even if he doth employ these advantages as he ought, he hath, after all, no more than the merit of a faithful steward, that is true to the trust committed to him: the more he hath received, the more he is accountable for. And if we consider how few have ever employed the advantages of life as they ought, to pride ourselves upon the distinctions bestowed upon us in this world, is in truth just such a degree of folly, as it would be to pride ourselves upon owing greater debts than we shall ever be able to discharge.

But to throw this consideration out of the question; if a man be blessed by God with some good qualities, with some signal blessings and advantages,

16 *Humility recommended from*

advantages, is it not a pity he should deform them all, and render them hateful by pride? is it not infinitely more eligible, that he add humility to his other virtues, to all his valuable qualities or advantages of what kind soever; in full assurance that this is the best addition he can make, and is in truth the noblest ornament of the noblest of earthly beings; I had almost said of heavenly! Be any man's merits as great as he can imagine them; yet he will not deny that our blessed Saviour's were greater than his; nay, greater than the merits of all mankind put together. He had enough not only to supply their defects, but likewise to atone for their transgressions; and yet, with all this fund of excellence, his humility was as conspicuous as his worth; the greatest ornament of his condition, and the only accession of grace and excellence he was capable of. And it

is

the Example of Jesus Christ. 17

is indeed the greatest we also are capable of in this world; not through the excess of our other accomplishments; (GOD knows) but on the contrary, to hide those numerous imperfections, which nothing but humility can cover, or atone for.

If all this be not sufficient to humble our vanity, let us reflect upon the number and perfection of beings that fill this infinity of space about us: and then think, what we ourselves are upon the comparison. Let us stretch our thoughts to contemplate the grandeur and extent of the creation, and that endless variety of glorious and excellent beings that inhabit its several portions; and then compute upon our own dignity, and the distinguishing rank due to us in the order of the universe. Is it not evident, that we are nothing even in respect of the world we dwell in? and that very world almost less than nothing in comparison of the universe?

C

verse?

18 *Humility recommended from*

verse? This little ball of earth was never imagined more than a point in respect of the heavens, nay, in respect of the sun: And what a portion of this point doth the mightiest among us constitute? Good God! how shameful a reflection is it, to be so utterly inconsiderable; and yet so stupid, as to be vain of advantages and endowments! That is in truth, to vaunt our vileness and our insignificance.

But farther;

A third argument for humility is taken from the consideration of Almighty God, and the relation we bear to him. But this, and what remains, must be deferred to the next opportunity.

SE R.

[19] Humility
~~respects our fellow-creatures, and as~~
~~respects our Almighty Creator~~
~~I the two first heads I have already~~
I now proceed to the
S E R M O N II.

Humility recommended principally
from the Example of Jesus Christ.

A L E N T S E R M O N.

St. Matthew, Chap. xi. Ver. 28, 29.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour, and
are heavy laden, and I will give
you rest:*

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of
me, for I am meek and lowly in
heart: and ye shall find rest unto
your souls.*

IN a former discourse upon these
words, I proposed from them to
recommend to you the christian vir-
tue of humility, under these three
heads, as it regards ourselves, as it

20 *Humility recommended from*

respects our fellow-creatures, and as it respects our Almighty Creator. The two first heads I have already spoke to. I now proceed to the third argument for humility, taken from the consideration of Almighty God, and the relation we bear to him.

And surely when we reflect upon the great and wonderful perfections of Almighty God, all infinite and incomprehensible; the consideration of so immense and excellent a being, should, must fill us with the most profound veneration of his adorable majesty, and the utmost contempt and detestation of our own vanity and vileness! If we turn our thoughts to his wisdom, *Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it.* If to his power, *When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; Lord! what is man that thou art mindful*

the Example of Jesus Christ. 21

mindful of him, or the son of man that thou vifitest him? If we turn our thoughts to contemplate the holiness of the divine being; how shall we dare to regard ourselves in his presence, who chargeth his angels with folly, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And in this contemplation, nothing could be more natural than that we should cry out with Job, xlii. 5, 6. Now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. If to his justice, is it possible for us to refrain from crying out with the Psalmist, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. If to his immensity; how shall we contemplate, or comprehend that high and mighty one that inhabiteth eternity! whom the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain; and yet humbleth he himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth. If we turn our thoughts to the

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goodness

22 *Humility recommended from*

goodness of Almighty God, how must a soul, that hath the least spark of gratitude, be sunk and overwhelmed with the sense of his infinite mercies, who daily poureth down his blessings upon us, and loadeth us with his benefits: who pardoneth all our offences, and healeth all our infirmities. If to his glory and grandeur; how shall we regard the dazzle and splendor of that majesty, before whom the cherubims veil their eyes! the nearer they approach his throne, the less they can bear his ineffable majesty: and the more they humble and abase themselves before him. Good God! and shall we dare to vaunt in thy presence? shall vile dust and ashes, shall wretched worms of the earth boast before thee? surely all these considerations are enough to sink us into the lowest confusion; nay, could it be possible, into annihilation and evanescence! to drive us

God

the Example of Jesus Christ. 23

us to call upon the hills to cover us,
and the mountains to fall upon us.

And thus you see the several arguments for humility, taken from the consideration of ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and our Almighty Creator. I come now, in the last place, to press you to this virtue, from the motive mentioned in my text, *and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

The evils that afflict us most in this world, are evidently these: pride, envy, ambition, avarice, wrath, revenge, and discontent.

Now it is beyond all question, that humility hath a plain and natural efficacy to remove, or at least to abate all these. For if we take a right estimate of our own worth, and form a just (that is) an humble opinion of our own merits, it is impossible we can think any condition of life beneath our dignity or our deserts. Or if it really were so, humility before GOD, a patient and

24 *Humility recommended from*

an humble resignation to his blessed will, is the surest means of exchanging it for a better, or making even the most abject condition of life, a means of more permanent and exalted happiness. *For altho' God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; as for the proud he knoweth them afar off. Surely he scorneth the scorers, but giveth grace to the humble.* And where the grace of God is, every felicity waits upon it: if we had humility enough to restrain our desires, and keep them in subjection to the good providence and wise appointments of Almighty God, every condition would be easy to us. But if we indulge them in all their unruly and unbounded pursuits, the universe will be too narrow to content them. If we had humility enough to believe, that God knows better our capacity and our merit, and disposes for us with more wisdom and goodness than we could

the Example of Jesus Christ. 25

could possibly do for ourselves; (and one would think this were no mighty condescension) we should not torment our lives with ambitious and vain pursuits, equally beyond our reach and our merits: we should not be eager to climb up steep and slippery heights, that might turn our brain, and throw us down into greater and more dreadful ruin. We should not rack our souls with envy and rancour, against the wretches that are above us; or dazzle our eyes and our imagination with those false lights and colours of happiness, which the lustre of their station throws upon them, for no other reason but because they are at so great heights above us. The splendor of a great fortune is like that of the moon: it is all borrowed light. And even so, it is the distance and the height above us, that makes it appear so bright and glorious: whereas the earth, which is no way inferior

26 *Humility recommended from*

rior to it, either in beauty or use; appears vile and fordid, merely because it is nearer. If we thought lowly of ourselves and our endowments, is it possible we should fall into such hasty and vehement resentments of a slighting expression, or a scornful look? or torment our minds, and break our rest, in devising how to return and wipe off the disgrace with seven-fold vengeance. No! for if we thought rightly upon these occasions, we should remember that our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ (a person of infinitely more dignity than we) was buffeted, and spit upon; maligned, and reproached by the vilest mortals; and yet bore it with inconceivable patience and humility: *not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.*

In a word, if the divine spirit of humility, had once taken full possession of our souls, we should be
freed

the Example of Jesus Christ. 27

freed from the great and signal torments of life: from avarice and ambition; from rancour and revenge; from repining and discontent; from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness. And should be blessed with the only true and real happiness to be attained on this side the grave, a clear conscience, and a quiet mind. (that is) In our blessed Saviour's phrase, *we should find rest unto our souls.*

If we yet want any thing to recommend this excellent virtue to us, we should remember, that this is the virtue which our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ pronounced the first blessing upon. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* It is a virtue so lovely in the eyes of men, that even they who are the greatest strangers to it, are often-times the most solicitous to affect an appearance of it. It is a virtue, which even our ambition should

28 *Humility recommended from*

should recommend to us: inasmuch as it is often found to be the forerunner even of earthly eminence: *before destruction, saith Solomon, the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.* It is indeed the only sure way to honour and eminence: *for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*; probably exalted even in this world: but infallibly in the next. And what are the vanities of this world, altho' we should miss of them, *in comparison of that glory which shall be revealed!* It is a virtue, necessary to every other: and therefore St. *Austin* concludes, the heathen philosophers had no perfect virtue, because they were strangers to humility. Nay, their seeming virtues (saith he) were rather real vices, as being all blended and corrupted with pride. It is a virtue, which peculiarly recommends itself to us, in this season of abstinence and humiliation. For humility is the truest

the Example of Jesus Christ. 29

truest abstinence in the world. It is abstinence from self-love and self-conceit; the hardest and the severest abstinence. It is abstinence from vaunting our own praises and exploits, and lessening the merits and performances of other men. It is abstinence from ambition and avarice, the strongest propensities in our nature. And consequently it is the the severest mortification, and the noblest self-denial. But above all, we are to remember that humility is the principle of all others best fitted to hide our infirmities, and to obtain mercy for them, from the hand of GOD. *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days, saith the Lord, but in his sons days, will I bring the evil.* It is the principle of all others best fitted to cover our own infirmities, and make us charitable to the infirmities of other men.

In

30 *Humility recommended from*

In one word, it is the principle of every thing that is good and lovely in our nature.

And in order to the attainment of this excellent virtue, give me leave to recommend to you in a more peculiar manner at this time, the christian discipline of abstinence and self-denial. Humility is very beautifully expressed by our blessed Saviour under the idea of poverty of spirit: whereas pride is the direct contrary. It is a redundance and a fulness. And it is such a fulness, as abstinence hath a natural force to abate: and therefore it is, that *Agur* beseeches God to give him *neither poverty nor riches*: and the reason of the latter petition is added, *least (saith he) I be full and forget thee*. So likewise it is said of *Jeshurun*, that *he waxed fat and kicked*. That is, he was filled, he was puffed up with pride, and he forgot God. He was in the condition of a horse, who being too much pampered, grows unruly to his

his rider; and too often, even kicks at his keeper. And it is, perhaps, for no other natural reason, that this vice reigns remarkably in youth, but because, in that season, the blood boils, and the heart is dilated and full. Now besides the natural force of fasting for abatement of this heat and fulness; the reflections that are wont to attend our hours of abstinence, will be of great efficacy to allay this passion. Hunger and thirst will naturally suggest to us, that we are as weak, and as liable to the wants and necessities of nature, as the meanest mortals. Altho' we have said in our hearts *we are Gods*, fasting will quickly teach us that without a supply of the common necessities of life, we *shall die like men*. From hence we shall learn, what excess of folly it is, for beings that are dependent upon the meanest productions of the earth, to be proud and vain! in one word we shall learn
the

32 *Humility recommended from*

the truth, and the wisdom of that excellent lesson, *pride was not made for man.* And when pride is thrown down from our hearts, it will fall, like its first author from heaven, with a numerous train of attendants: strife, sedition, envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness.

From all which, God of his infinite mercy deliver us all through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N III.

The Felicity arising from the Practice of the Christian Virtues, particularly explained, and proved at large, in the several Instances of Patience, Meekness, Temperance, Chastity, Faith, Hope, and Charity.

St. *Matthew*, Chap. xi. Ver. 30.

My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

IN the preceding verse, our blessed Saviour exhorteth all mankind to take his yoke upon them.

Taking the yoke, is a *Jewish* phrase, by which they expressed the engagements men laid themselves under, to observe the law, and all the ceremonials of the *Jewish* religion.

34 *The Felicity arising from the*

gion. And this engagement was properly enough termed a taking the yoke, in the most slavish sense of the word: that is, disposing and submitting themselves to a new burden: forasmuch as men were bound by it to very painful and heavy loads, which neither they, nor their fathers were able to bear: such as expensive offerings, frequent and tedious journeys to *Jerusalem*, and all the other ceremonials of the law: besides the additional weight of those burdens the pharisees heaped upon them by their traditions.

Our Saviour therefore, as well in opposition to these grievous burdens and this galling yoke, as to the servitude of sin in general; exhorts men to that condition of ease, which the gospel was fitted to bestow upon all that embraced it. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for*

I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

I am meek and lowly, saith our Saviour. Unlike those haughty pharisees ; regardless of all the disquiet they gave by their cruel exactions and impositions. The merciful son of God pitied the distresses of his people : and was ready, was earnest to relieve them. And therefore calleth upon them, from the abundance of his compassion ; *take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls.* The blessed Jesus well knew, that however mankind had wearied themselves, in a painful observance of all the religious rites and ceremonies, which then prevailed in the world ; they never could find rest to their souls. Outward rites and observances could never take away the sting of conscience, nor the guilt of sin. They cannot give peace with God. Nothing but faith in Jesus Christ, and that perfection

36 *The Felicity arising from the*

of holiness that flowed from it, could effect this. Because no other institution ever enjoined universal holiness: neither is there any other name under heaven, from whence cometh our salvation. Whereas, *being justified by faith in Christ*, St. Paul assureth us, *we have peace with God*. For this reason, our Saviour, in pity to the distresses of mankind, exhorteth them to take his yoke upon them, *that they might find rest unto their souls*. And to hinder them from being discouraged at the thoughts of taking a yoke, he assureth them that his yoke is easy (the word in the original signifies good and gracious). The obligations men lay themselves under, to live up to the precepts of the christian religion, are a yoke; which both our ease and our interest recommend to us. The precepts of christianity are perfectly agreeable to our human and reasonable nature. And admirably fitted to perfect and
exalt

exalt it. And, of consequence, to raise it to all that height of happiness it is capable of in this world. And to prove this, shall be the business of the following discourse.

And this I shall endeavour to do, by shewing the natural felicity that attends the practice of each of those virtues, that are particularly recommended and enjoined by the christian religion. And these are patience, meekness, temperance, chastity, faith, hope, and charity.

To begin then with patience, the least amiable in the eyes of mankind, though in truth not the lowest, or least desirable in this goodly train.

Christian patience, is a virtue which teacheth us to bear all the calamities and cross accidents of this life, with resignation and equanimity. In full assurance, that this world, and all that are in it, are governed by an infinitely wise and

38 *The Felicity arising from the*

good GOD: whose providence extendeth itself to the most minute objects and accidents. And disposeth the issues and events of all things, both in heaven and earth; in the wisest manner and to the best purposes.

Now the consequence from all this to a good christian, is this; that whatever befalleth him in this world, otherwise than through his own fault, is, at that juncture, and in those circumstances, the very best that could befall him. Because it is the permission, and the appointment, of the wisest and the best being, for the wisest and best ends and reasons.

And what infinite anxiety and disquiet doth that one consideration remove from the heart? all the malice, the malignity, the reproach, the revenge, the insults, the indignities, the injuries of men, are, in this view, proofs and trials of virtue here, and, rightly used, pledges of everlasting felicity

felicity hereafter. And the unhappy authors of the evil, are infinitely more the objects of your pity, than your resentment. In a word, by the power of this one virtue, all the calamities, and cross accidents of life, are taken away at once. And nothing but complacency and equanimity, and an entire dependence upon the mightiest, the wisest, and the best of all beings planted in their stead.

And is not this the height, the refinement, the perfection of philosophy? the utmost reach of human wisdom could go no farther, than to advise you to bear your calamities quietly; because it was a folly to contend: and impatience would but inflame the wound, which it could not cure. Whereas christianity not only teacheth you to bear your afflictions, but to rejoice in them, and to triumph over them: forasmuch as we are assured, that if we bear them as

40 *The Felicity arising from the*
we ought, *these light afflictions, which*
are but for a moment, shall work for
us a far more exceeding and eternal
weight of glory. So that this one
virtue intirely changeth the whole
state of things here below. It raiseth
men above the condition of morta-
lity, and maketh them, in one mo-
ment, superior to all the calamities
of life, and by so doing, becometh
a fountain of flowing joy, in the
midst of this vale of misery.

The next christian virtue I come
to consider, is meekness, Which
seems to be made up of resignation
and humility: and is directly oppo-
site to wrath and revenge; to pride
and ambition; the great fountains
of contention and disquiet in this
world: which, despising the peace of
society, the dictates of reason and
conscience, and all the natural en-
joyments of life; give themselves up
to unruly purposes and fantastical
pursuits, that have no bounds, nor
any

any rational view. Wrath and revenge, incessantly creating new evils: and pride and ambition, perpetually multiplying our natural wants, even to ten thousand fold: creating a dependence upon the meanest and basest part of mankind; and (what is worse than all this) leading to such actions and such designs, such destruction and devastation, and detestable purposes, as a good man cannot so much as think of, without horror.

And altho' ambition be commonly regarded as the vice of a few particular spirits only; yet, forasmuch as it is found to be, for the most part, no more than an higher and more unruly degree of pride; and such as is found among all orders and conditions of men; it can never be improper to expose the folly and iniquity of it to the lowest and meanest assembly of mankind: and as to pride, if there were no other evil in this vice, than that it banished all good minds

42 *The Felicity arising from the*
minds from about us; all faithful
friends and faithful counsellors; and
made us a prey to panders and para-
sites; slaves and flatterers; common
sense would teach us the folly and
the misery of this vice. And recom-
mend in its place, that gentleness of
manners, and that humility of heart,
that lead directly to calm and con-
tentment: that conciliate the affec-
tions and the esteem of all mankind;
and make men amiable even in the
eyes of enemies. That ornament of
a meek and quiet spirit, (as the apostle
expresseth it) more becoming than
all the inventions of pride put toge-
ther: and more precious than the
wealth of both worlds.

*Blessed are the meek, saith our Sa-
viour, for they shall inherit the earth.
Yet a little while and the ungodly shall
be clean gone (saith the psalmist,
Psal. xxxvii. ver. 10, 11.) Thou shalt
look after his place, and he shall be
away. But the meek spirited shall
possess*

possess the earth and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace. Pride, avarice, and ambition, may go on in endless pursuits and acquisitions. Pride may vaunt, avarice amass, and ambition triumph: but equanimity only can enjoy. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly (saith Solomon) than to divide the spoil with the proud. Here the wise man, by a noble scheme of speech, opposeth not the blessings of virtue to the reward of vice; (that were to do vice too much honour; the comparison was odious) no, he opposeth the naked virtue, and that too, the lowest and least magnificent of all others; to all the advantages of the highest and most exalted vice. The spirit of meekness, to the spoils of pride. The virtue was reward enough to itself: and all the attainments of ambition were not to be once named with it. *Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly,*

44 *The Felicity arising from the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

Temperance and chastity come next to be considered, and are of near alliance to one another, as having one common cause, and one common enemy. The same abstinence is friendly, and the same excess destructive to both.

And first, As to temperance; it is evident, that if a clear head, and chearful health, sound sleep, and a good appetite; if these be the greatest natural blessings; then temperance, the sure earnest and best guardian of all these, must be numbered among the greatest felicities of life: and its contrary esteemed the greatest curse, that can befall a rational creature. Because, to such a being, it destroyeth every satisfaction, and every end of life.

And this vice, tho' it be attended with fevers, and phrenzies, tho' it reveal secrets, and murder friends; yet

yet is it in no other instance so pernicious to mankind, as in its enmity to the great christian virtue of chastity. A virtue of little account in the heathen world : or at least of no merit except in the other sex. *Fæminarum ista virtus est*, saith the orator : and yet a virtue of such infinite consequence to the happiness of private families, and the peace of society ; that there is not one among all the social virtues, upon which both the being, and the well-being, of mankind so intirely depend. And this, *Augustus*, that wise emperor of *Rome*, was so sensible of, from the growing corruption of his own age, in this point ; that he was apprehensive of ruin to the greatest empire in the world, from the contrary vice. And *Cicero*, among the regulations which he tells *Cesar*, the public expected from him, for the establishment of the common wealth ; mentions the repressing of unruly desires,

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46 *The Felicity arising from the*
fires, and the propagation of chil-
dren: (*reprimendæ libidines, propa-*
ganda soboles) plainly implying, that
the one was not to be expected
without the other.

Indeed, in the darker ages of the
world, there was a seeming plea for
this practice, from the seeming in-
dulgence, permitted to the Jews, in
the business of divorces, and the ig-
norance of the heathen world, in this
point. But as our Saviour, Jesus
Christ, hath corrected this ill-under-
stood and abused indulgence, and
removed this ignorance, by shewing
the union of one man with one wo-
man, to be the original law of na-
ture, evidenced in the very creation;
and forasmuch as the contrary prac-
tice can answer no one end of nature,
or society, but is equally pernicious
to both; therefore; both reason and
religion concur in the prohibition
of it; as one of the highest offences
that can be committed either a-
gainst

gainst God, or the community. And God himself hath, for some ages past, manifested his wrath and vengeance against this vice, by a signal judgment and severe visitation; such as never was inflicted (that we know of) upon any other sin, since the creation of the world.

And that chastity is more pleasant than the contrary is evident. First, from this general reasoning, that whatever contributes most to the good and happiness of the whole, contributes most to the good and happiness of every part: because the whole is made up of those parts. And it is certain (as I before observed) that no one virtue contributeth more to the good and peace of mankind in general, than *this of chastity*.

Again, (not to insist upon that endless train of contention, jealousy, distraction, and villainy; that are inseparable from a variety of pursuits)

48 *The Felicity arising from the*

suits) all appetites are limited; and the gratification of them, within the bounds assigned them by nature, and by reason, pleasurable. Because, in that limitation, they contribute to the preservation of society, and the peace and well being of every particular in it. And pleasure was necessary, in order to excite to the attainment of those ends. But to expect the same pleasure from a boundless indulgence, and when they act directly against their end, is highly senseless and absurd.

A certain portion of meat and drink (such as nature demandeth and reason directeth) is pleasant to a good appetite. But will any man, in his senses, expect the same pleasure from twice, or ten times, or twenty times that proportion? or from any proportion that is sought after in direct contradiction to the ends, for which that appetite was implanted?

And

And therefore, a boundless gratification of appetite, if we are to believe either the reasonings of the wisest men, or the experience of the most abandoned ; is the greatest slavery in the attempt, and folly in the intention. Nay, it is such signal stupidity in the case before us ; that if a man were to paint folly in perfection, it would be by describing it, labouring to multiply the objects of desire, and at the same time impairing the power of enjoying them. To conclude therefore, it is evident to the clearest conviction, that the indulgence of this appetite (as of all others) is pleasant, only within certain bounds : and that those bounds, are the bounds of reason, and religion. One step beyond these must carry you, either to the corruption of innocence, or the enjoyment of corruption. And what pleasure is it possible for a thinking being to derive from either of these ? or rather,

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what

50 *The Felicity arising from the*

what endless disquiet, and regret, must one act of this kind affix to the soul? the pleasure of such an action, resulted from the momentary appetite, and must die with it: but the regret of so much vileness, ariseth from the soul, and must continue with it: and altho' men may endeavour to bury such reflections, in the hurry, and amusements of life; yet they may assure themselves, they will find them again, in every interval of reflection: they may assure themselves they will return with ten fold horror, at the hour of death: and (what is infinitely worse) at the day of judgment.

Drink water, saith Solomon, out of thine own cistern; pure and undefiled: and would any man that had it in his power to do so, hazard fame, and health, and life, for such as were common, and polluted? surely, such a conduct, if there were no account to be given for it here-
2 *after,*

after, would lay a man under the justest imputation of stupidity and madness.

On the other hand, as to the corruption of innocence, can there be a more dreadful guilt, than to turn angels into devils? to expose the most helpless, of the more heavenly part of the creation, to infamy, prostitution, and poverty; and such corruptions of body and mind, as render them at once the reproach, and the horror of human nature!

Having now shewn you the natural pleasures that result from patience, meekness, temperance, and chastity; together with the evils of the contrary vice; I proceed next to the three great graces of christianity, faith, hope, and charity.

And first, faith; whether it be considered as a firm confidence in the protection and providence of Almighty God, in this world; or a firm dependence on the performance

52 *The Felicity arising from the*

of his promises in conferring the beatitudes of the next; it is, in the first, our only support, under affliction. And, in the second, our only security of solid happiness. A firm confidence in the immediate providence, and protection of GOD; is the only strong shield against all the evils, and calamities of this life: and a firm dependence upon his promises, is a joyful anticipation, of all the beatitudes of the next. It is like the poet's description of fame, altho' it walk upon earth, its head reacheth into heaven. In short, this one christian grace, turneth all the boasts of philosophy, and the dreams of enthusiasm into reality: and uniteth in itself, the stoic contempt of pain, and the epicurean calm and serenity of mind. It rebateth all the stings of life; and doubleth its enjoyments: by receiving them all, as earnest of infinitely greater. And this is so certain, that
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all the differences of conditions in this life, with regard to happiness; may be clearly resolved into this one principle: he that hath most faith hath most felicity: and he that hath least faith hath most misery. For as he is more liable to evil, on account of having exempted himself from the peculiar protection of God; so hath he infinitely less consolation and relief, under the calamities of life.

And as faith is the sure fountain of happiness, so is it likewise the sure foundation of hope. Hope, even before it was founded upon faith, was the only relief from anxiety and disquiet, that was left to the miserable race of mortals, from the fall. Hope, even when uncertain and unreasonable, can alone sweeten the bitter cup of life. What consolation then, what joy, what rapture, may we not raise from it; when it is built upon a sure basis? upon Jesus
E 3 Christ,

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Christ, the rock of our salvation! that royal high priest, *who hath entered within the veil*, and taken possession of all the treasures of heaven: that heaven, to which he hath opened the way for us. That heaven, which the blessed hope of immortality maketh our portion and our possession, even in this life! and therefore, whoever liveth so in this world, as to forfeit this hope, let him assure himself he hath renounced the greatest consolation; the greatest, the noblest, (I had almost said) the only real enjoyment in life.

I come now, in the last place, to the last and greatest of the christian virtues, charity: or, in other words, universal love, and good-will to all mankind.

And as love is allowed the most agreeable movement of the soul, is it possible to conceive a greater instance of the divine goodness, than to make that the badge of our profession,

feſſion, which is the pledge of our felicity, even in this world. But indeed, this is the eſtabliſhed courſe of GOD's providence towards us : and the great aim of all his diſpenſations ; to make us virtuous, in order to make us happy. And he hath made chriſtian love the greateſt virtue ; becauſe it creates the greateſt happineſs.

If a ſincere and generous friendſhip be allowed the greateſt felicity, this world can boaſt ; how is that felicity multiplied, when this friendſhip, and this affection is extended to all mankind ? and this chriſtian charity requireth, and this chriſtian charity effecteth. How happy, how heavenly a ſtate of mind, is that, which diſpoſeth a man to do good offices to all mankind ; and to take delight in every circumſtance of happineſs, that befalleth them ! this is the beſt emblem, as well as the beſt earneſt, of the joys of hea-

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ven ! because it multiplieth our happiness to infinity, even in this life.

And this happiness is so naturally desirable, that they must be strangely degenerate, who are not solicitous of the felicity of doing good, even tho' they are regardless of the virtue from whence only it can flow sincere. One would imagine from the conduct of *Cæsar*, that this was the principle that engaged him in all the toils and perils of his life ; nay, even in the destruction of his country. And *Phalaris* (if we may believe the image drawn of him in his epistles) grasped after that tyranny that was so pernicious to himself and others, for no other ends, than the power, and the pleasure of doing good offices.

And, indeed, this is so exceeding a pleasure to an ingenuous and beneficent mind, that one would think it were impossible to need arguments, or motives, to excite men to it, but

on the contrary, that there was a necessity of the utmost caution and restraint, to prevent the pleasure from boiling over, into excess.

And as this pleasure is great in every other instance of beneficence, in the relief of the poor and distressed; it is exquisite! to reflect, that by a small portion of our abundance we have redeemed from sin and slavery; we have *saved a soul alive*. Or that by one poor alms, we have *rescued him that was appointed to die!*

These are acts, godlike in their power, as well as their goodness: for what is there more glorious in the exercise of omnipotence! what is there so glorious as the bestowing of life, and health, and happiness! diffusing felicity all around! it is no wonder then, that GOD should be particularly delighted with such offices as these, as being the noblest imitation, and most lovely transcripts of his own adorable perfections, such

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as will most resemble us to the divinity in this world, and make us happy with him to all eternity in the next.

And now, my brethren, these are the burdens the christian religion imposeth upon you: and this is the yoke our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ exhorteth you to take. And we may appeal to common sense, whether these be not light burdens, and this an easy yoke? an easy, a delightful yoke. A yoke, contrived, and framed intirely for our ease, and happiness. A yoke, not intended to prepare us for new toils, and new loads; but to enable us to support those we already labour under: to enable us to bear the burden of life, not only with patience but with pleasure.

This, my brethren, is that yoke, from which the pretended free-thinkers, the vain-boasters of this world, would redeem you. To
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make you perfectly happy they would redeem you from every virtue in life, or (what in effect amounteth to the same thing) they would rob those virtues of their firmest support; their surest, and strongest sanctions, and their noblest rewards. To make you happy, they would redeem you from virtue, and the fear of God. *i. e.* To make you happy, they would tear you from the only true fountain, and foundation of happiness, either in this world or the next. Without which the very idea of happiness in a reasonable dependent being is contradictory and absurd.

These are they, that *draw iniquity with cords of vanity*. This is that boasted, that superior order of men; who challenge a pre-eminence over the rest of their species, by professing to live without faith, without revelation, without the least dependence, on any particular protection, or providence

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vidence of God in this world: and without hope, at least without any rational and well grounded hope of heaven, in the next. *i. e.* In truth professing themselves wise, they are emphatically foolish! for what creature, that had the least remains of reason, could bear the thoughts of an imperfect perishable being, surrounded with misery on all sides, in a world of vanity; unguided by superior wisdom, and unsupported by infinite power here; and unrewarded hereafter. Is it not evident, that the only rational wish such a creature could make, would be, to go out of that world, and to get rid of that being, as soon as possible. And of this the practice of self-murder so frequent, and so vindicated with free-thinkers, is a sufficient and abundant proof.

But still it may be objected, that religion is a yoke, and the duties of it burdens: and why should free-born

Practice of Christian Virtues. 61

born minds, bend themselves to any yoke? to this I answer, that some yoke is absolutely necessary. We must either be ruled by reason or by appetite; one of these is unavoidable: and the only question is, which of them ought to rule? and it is just such a question; as if we should sit down and debate gravely, whether the eyes should direct the feet, or the feet direct the eyes? the very question is absurd; and a serious solution of it would be full as ridiculous.

But still it is a restraint. True, and what being is there, either in heaven or earth, that is not liable to restraint? Almighty GOD cannot lie, cannot deceive, cannot be unjust or unmerciful: and is he the less happy on this account? and must we be the less happy, by becoming more like GOD; by being resembled to the happiest, as well as the best of beings. We call that
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our grievance, which is our glory. We mistake those chains, for marks of slavery, which are in truth ensigns of honour. The restraints of reason and religion, are absolutely necessary to our happiness: they are the glory, and the privilege of reasonable beings. And to shake off these for the licentious servitude of sin, would be just as wise, as if *Adam* should deliberately quit the delights of paradise, for the briars and thorns of this vale of misery (as soon as GOD had cursed the earth) because he could rove more at large amongst them. Or that subjects, who were governed in freedom, and peace, and plenty, should, from the insolence of prosperity, shake off that easy yoke; the happiest of all mortal conditions! break all the bonds of society, and dissolve into a lawless anarchy; because they would live without any sort of restraint. And yet it is beyond all controversy, that

a state of lawless liberty, is a state of the greatest servitude, as well as misery imaginable : because there villainy, and wickedness would have absolute sway. Nay, it is the basest of all servitudes, where the worse must tyrannize, and the best be oppressed. And such, in the strictest sense, is the dominion of blind impulse, and unguided appetite.

And therefore, my brethren, whatever be the conduct of the mad, the giddy, the enslaved, the dark, the deluded part of mankind ; let us, who are taught better things ; who are more enlightened and informed ; let us, who are (as the apostle expresseth it) *children of the day, walk honestly as in the day : not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying : possessing our souls in meekness ; and followers of them, who thro' faith and patience, inherit the promises : putting on the breast-plate of righteousness*

64 *The Felicity arising from, &c.*

*ousness and love; and for a helmet,
the hope of salvation; which hope we
have as an anchor of the soul, both sure
and stedfast: which hope entereth with-
in the veil, the mansions of eternal bliss,
whither the forerunner is entered for
us, even Jesus, made an high priest
for ever, after the order of Melchi-
zedek. To whom, &c.*

SER-

S E R M O N I V.

A plain Inquiry into the Reasonableness of ridiculing Revelation, and the Merit of Christian Faith.

2 Ep. of St. Peter, Ch. iii. Ver. 3.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last Days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts.

THE expression of *the last days*, in the text, is varied by St. Jude, into that of *the last time*: beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how that they told you, there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after
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their own ungodly lusts. Now by
the last time, is evidently meant the
times of the *Messiah*: according to
that celebrated division of the dura-
tion of the world, among the *Jews*.
Two thousand years before the law,
two thousand years under the law,
and two thousand years under the
Messiah. Whether this division be
strictly just, is no way material to
our present purpose: our concern is
only, to know, that the times we
now live in, must, from the early,
unprejudiced acknowledgment of the
Jews themselves, be the times of the
Messiah: forasmuch as the times of
the *Messiah*, were always regarded
as the last period in this great distri-
bution, as exhibiting the last state of
things; the last of divine dispensati-
ons to mankind, in this world: af-
ter which, the world itself should be
done away. And therefore this period
is, very properly signified by the ex-
pression

pression of the *last days*, and the *last time*. And of this period, it is prophesied in my text, that in it, should arise *scoffers walking after their own lusts*. And from the context it appeareth, that these *scoffers* were men, who turned all revelation into ridicule: and made a jest of all the promises and threats of the gospel. And whereas the coming of our blessed Saviour, first, to execute vengeance upon the unbelieving *Jews*, and secondly, to judge the world, were in the number of these promises; these infidels could not forbear insulting the credulity of christians upon these points, even in the apostolic age. Even in that very age, wherein Christ had given such infinite proofs of his power, and his veracity. So hardened is infidelity to the greatest possible demonstrations of truth. And altho' the first of these promises was to be fulfilled in that very generation, and within

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a very few years, and actually was so; yet could they not restrain their insolence even for so small a season; but cried out, *where is the promise of his coming*, even at the moment that his vengeance was impending over the heads of his enemies: nay, at the moment that the *Roman* army was executing some part of it upon them.

From the text, thus explained, I shall take occasion first to inquire into the reasonableness of this practice of ridiculing the principles and persuasions of those who believe the scriptures to be the word of God: and secondly, I shall inquire into the nature and completion of the prediction now before us.

First then, &c.

Now if these principles are in themselves absurd, and senseless, it is indeed no wonder they should be objects of ridicule, to men of freer thought,

thought, and more enlarged abilities. But, if, in truth, they contain in them, nothing absurd, and irrational, nothing unbecoming the dignity of our own nature, or unworthy the nature of GOD; it can never be either the duty, or the proof of superior wisdom, to make them the objects of reproach, or ridicule, but quite the contrary.

Now the first principle of those who believe the scriptures to be the word of GOD is this; that it hath pleased the divine being, at sundry times from the creation, to make several revelations of himself, and his will, to his creatures, in order to their happiness: to direct them in the several duties of life, and bind them more effectually to the discharge of them.

And in order to determine the reasonableness of this belief, it will be necessary to examine, whether man, with all his native advantages

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of reason, and reflection, needed any assistance, or direction, or restraint of a superior being : and it is certain, that if with all those boasted advantages, he continued weak and ignorant, and corrupt, liable to much error, and iniquity. To many doubts that asked for instruction, to many dangers that called for aid, and many distresses that wanted relief ; in this condition, he must need the direction, and assistance of superior wisdom and goodness, and the support and restraint of superior power : and that this is the best condition of man in a state of nature, requireth no great sagacity to conceive, nor ingenuity to acknowledge. And the man that was weak or wicked enough to deny this, to deny that he himself was weak, and wicked, and ignorant, would give such demonstration of his insincerity to the rest of the world, as would abundantly confute his own position. And if, after this, he
needed

needed any more than the reflections of his own mind, and the testimony of his own heart for his conviction, we might appeal to the present deplorable state of ignorance, barbarity, and brutality, under which the whole heathen world labours at this day: as well as to the complaints, the corruptions, and the confessions of the whole antient, and more enlightened heathen world, upon this head. And indeed God seemeth on purpose to have left mankind in several places, and periods of time, to the error of their own ways, and the vanity of their own wisdom, on purpose to convince them of the necessity of superior sanctions, and a direction more than human. Is it then absurd to believe, that a being, of infinite wisdom and goodness, should vouchsafe to instruct, and admonish a creature that needed admonishment, and instruction: a creature liable to error, and iniquity,

and capable of information and amendment? or rather is not such information and assistance, the necessary consequence of infinite wisdom and goodness? for how is it possible to conceive highly, or even moderately, of the benignity of any being, who beheld his creatures, the work of his own hands, wandering in the ways of error and iniquity, and treading in the paths that lead to misery and destruction, without once reaching out his hand to conduct them: without once vouchsafing them the least aid, or direction, or reproof: especially when he might administer any, or all of these, with infinite advantage to them, and without any degree of trouble or disquiet to himself. A father that dealt thus by his children, would be a monster among men! and could not fail to be treated as a creature lost to all sense of virtue, as well as paternal affection. A man that was capable
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of less cruelty, even to *the beasts that perish*; a man, that failed to aid and relieve an innocent and distressed brute, altho' with some degree of trouble to himself, could not but be regarded as greatly wanting in the principles of common humanity: and greatly estranged from that benignity, and compassion, which is the truest test of goodness, and the sure characteristic of every amiable excellence in our composition. And shall we then deny that excellence to Almighty God, without which, even man would be defective, and unlovely! without which, he would be monstrous and malignant! and can it be weak and unwise to ascribe that perfection to the Almighty which it would be so utterly senseless, and iniquitous, and unphilosophical to deny him? can it be weak and unwise to believe that God actually hath done, what would be so absolutely cruel, and ungodlike in him

him, not to do? With great submission then, the deist hath no great reason to triumph upon this head, or to insult the believer's weakness and want of capacity. Nor is it possible for him, to impute these defects and imperfections to others, upon this score, without shamefully and signally fixing those imputations upon himself.

The next principle of believers, is this: that the scriptures of the old and new testament, are the revealed will of God; and contain the chief of those several manifestations, which he hath been pleased to make of himself, and of his will to mankind, from the foundation of the world. The laws and precepts which he hath given his creatures, to walk by; containing in the clearest terms, the rules of their duty in the several relations of life; together with their several sanctions of mighty rewards and dreadful punishments: and both
these

these often and signally exemplified in various instances of mercy, and justice, and judgment, for the encouragement and reward of righteousness, and the terror of perverseness. And since I have already shewn, that it is reasonable to believe, that God hath at several times made revelations of himself, and his will to his creatures; the question now before us, is, whether it be reasonable to believe, that the scriptures of the old and new testament, contain any of those revelations. And in order to determine us in this inquiry, it will be necessary to examine whether those scriptures have all the marks and characters of truth, internal, and external, that can reasonably be demanded, or were ever required, to ascertain the truth, and genuineness of any writings whatsoever, in the same circumstances: such as antiquity, sincerity, honesty, and disinterestedness
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in the writers and relators ; sufficient care in the keeping and conveying those writings to posterity, pure, and uncorrupt ; various copies in the hands of men of opposite persuasions and interests, to prevent all possibility of combination in fraud ; stile and phraseology of the age in which they profess to be published ; the consistency of manners, and times, and things, and characters, exhibited in them ; purity, and perfection of the precepts delivered : and lastly, the dignity, coherence, and uniformity of the whole design ; every way worthy the wisdom, and power, and perfection of the supreme being ; whose will they profess to deliver, and whose work they profess to be.

And that they have all these marks, and characters of truth, hath been demonstrated a thousand times : nor have all the enemies of revelation, ever yet proved them defective in
any

any one of them, altho' frequently and loudly called upon, and provoked, and challenged so to do : and indeed often attempting to do so, to their infinite reproach ! have these writings as much evidence of their truth, as they could, in the nature of things, be reasonably supposed, or required to have, if all mankind agreed that they actually were true ? they have, nor is it denied but they have : nay they have not only these evidences, but likewise evidences of a superior nature ; such as no other writings ever pretended to, from the foundation of the world ! national institutions, in memorial of facts there registered, coeval with the facts themselves ; and uninterruptedly continued from that day to this : facts, which they could not be deceived in, and institutions of some danger, and great difficulty, and expence, which they could never combine to impose upon themselves and
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their posterity : and which if they had not begun in the time, and manner, and for the reasons there delivered, could never, in the nature of things, begin at all. Prophecies early delivered, and gradually completed in almost every age, from that day to this ; and many of them, actually and incontestably true at this instant. Prophecies of events, in themselves, exceedingly improbable ; and such as no human wisdom could foresee, or policy contrive, or power bring to pass : and yet many of them, not only attested, but fulfilled also, by the professed, and known enemies to those very truths they were intended to establish. And if these writings are still false, with all this evidence of truth, I desire to know of the deist, how he will vindicate the justice, the wisdom, and the goodness of GOD, not only for permitting, but for furnishing clear
accu-

accumulated, invincible evidence to falsehoods?

And can it, after all this, be rational to disbelieve these writings to be true, which have all the marks and characters of truth, which any writings were ever known, or required to have, from the foundation of the world, and vastly more; such marks and characters, as no writings that had half of them, were ever yet found to be false: is it irrational to believe, what it is impossible, upon any ground of reason to doubt or to deny? is it any way consistent with the divine goodness, is it possible in the nature of things, to give an infinite variety of invincible evidence to a lie? most certainly it is not. And must we, after all, disclaim these writings, because a set of men are vain, and wicked, and ignorant, and shameless enough, to sneer, and to shake their heads, and break their jests, and revile where they should reverence;

rence; GOD forbid! this would be to renounce all the possible tests and marks of truth and certainty; this would be to reverse all the rules of a rational conduct, and conviction; this would be to make error the test of truth, and madness the rule of reason.

The last principle of believers that I shall at present mention, is this. That the scriptures being once proved to be the word of GOD, they are indispensably obliged to assent to the truth of every proposition contained in them; and this is a necessary and unavoidable consequence from the principle of their proceeding from, and being inspired by GOD: for if they do come from GOD, every thing contained in them must be true; or GOD must be the author of untruth; which is impious, and abominable; and impossible to be imagined by any reasonable creature. And it is upon this foundation, that
faith

faith becometh the most rational principle, and the most indispensable duty that can be conceived: and at the same time, the justest and truest ground of favour, and acceptance with Almighty God. For if the scriptures have all the characters and evidences of truth that can be required to demonstrate any writing whatsoever to be genuine, and authentic; (as they undoubtedly have) we must of necessity receive, and admit them as such: and if we do admit them to be genuine, and authentic, we must of necessity admit the truth of every thing contained in them: and if we assent to the truth of every thing contained in them, we must of necessity have a firm confidence in all the promises, and assurances there delivered: that is, we must have a firm dependence upon the power, and wisdom, and truth, and goodness, and mercy of Almighty God: in every point there

contained, and in the manner, and under the circumstances there exhibited to us. And can there be a juster or more rational recommendation of any person to the supreme being than such a faith, and such a dependence. Suppose a prince had two sorts of subjects, one of them upon a careful survey and candid inquiry into his title, and conduct, and character, owned his authority, and his laws; and upon all occasions, made great acknowledgments of his justice, his wisdom, and his goodness, in a thousand instances; and not only professed, but really had an intire dependence upon him, on the score of those perfections, and the many proofs he had given of them. But another party of his subjects, not only disputed, but rejected those laws, altho' they had all rational grounds of being satisfied that they were his, if they would but take the trouble to examine honestly

neftly and candidly into them : and in confequence of this difbelief, professed to have no dependence upon any of the declarations contained in them : owned indeed that he must be wife, and good, and just : that is, that the character of a king required him to be so : but for their part, they utterly disbelieved every instance, that ever was pretended to be given, of his wisdom, or justice, or goodness, or any other perfection that might relate to his subjects : of whom they believed him so utterly regardless, that they were satisfied he had never once troubled his head about giving them any laws at all : nor had ever yet rewarded the obedience or fidelity of any one of them in any one instance in this world ; nor ever would ! and as for punishing their disobedience, that they were sure was utterly inconsistent with that character of excessive goodness, which his admirers gave him : and

which they were well enough inclined to believe of him. That for their own parts, they knew their duty, and needed no direction; nor thought themselves bound to obey any one of those his pretended laws as such. They owned no particular or distinguished obligation to him, nor dependence upon him. And in consequence of these principles, never made him any open avowed acknowledgments, or addressees of thanks, for his protection, and the infinite blessings and advantages of his administration; nor any petition for the continuance of them: but on the contrary constantly avoided, and diligently declined all occasions, and places, and seasons, of discharging those duties to him. I say, suppose the wisest and best king in the world had subjects of these different characters, can it be a doubt with any rational creature, which of those subjects that prince was

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bound

bound in honour, and in conscience, to have most regard for, or shew most favour to? and if it cannot, can it be a doubt with any rational creature, why faith is so strictly and strongly insisted upon in the scriptures, as a qualification absolutely, and fundamentally necessary to recommend us to the favour and acceptance of Almighty God?

But to this it is objected, that faith is not in our power: no man can command his belief: and therefore it is absurd to make that a necessary recommendation to the favour of God, which is in no man's power to attain. To this I answer, that faith is the effect of a rational conviction, and a rational conviction is the effect of an humble, a candid, and a rational inquiry: and is it possible any man can hope to be excused for neglecting to make such an inquiry in the concern of his highest interest? to omit a thousand

other books of unanswerable evidence in proof of revelation ; will any man pretend to have read *Lesly's* method with the deists, and the defence of it, candidly, and carefully, and with an humble and honest resolution to embrace the truth, without as rational a conviction of the truth of revelation, as of any proposition in *Euclid* ? and will any man then pretend to be excusable for want of faith ? that is, for want of a rational conviction ; when that want ariseth only from his neglecting to employ a few hours seriously, in the business of his own salvation ? or what is full as bad, from indulging that pride and arrogance, which overbear and suppress the clearest evidence ? And therefore, with great submission, the infidel, is so far from having a right to laugh at, and insult the faith of christians, that in truth, all mankind have a right to insult, and despise him (as far as charity

riety and humanity will allow) as the last and meanest of mortals : who, not content to be monstrously stupid, and senseless in relation to his own highest interest, hath yet effrontery enough, to insult the wisest and most rational conduct of other men.

And thus having examined upon what wise grounds the deist laughs at the christian faith, and the scriptures in general, it will be proper, in the next place, to examine into the particular cavils by which they pretend to support this conduct. And here, it might be sufficient to observe, in the general, that the deist maketh his own reason and even his own humour, and vain imagination, the test of truth, and justice, and perfection of every kind : and therefore, if he can but lay his finger upon one passage in those sacred writings, which his ignorance, or prejudice, or favourite vice will not suffer him thoroughly to comprehend,

and clearly to reconcile to the wisdom, and goodness, and other attributes of the divine being, he hath done with the whole business of revelation at once, and thinketh he hath an undoubted right to renounce it intirely : now this conduct is many ways irrational and erroneous.

1st, Because many passages in those sacred writings refer to the state and things of another world : of which we have no adequate idea, and consequently, are to be considered as objects of faith, or trials of humility.

2^{dly}, Because many passages in them refer to customs and manners now obsolete, and unknown : yet surely it would be strange reasoning, to infer, that because none such are now known to exist, therefore no such ever did exist. And

3^{dly}, Because our narrow conceptions are not the test of truth. Nothing but wisdom, infinite and unerring can be such a test.

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If ignorance could controul truth, or cavil overthrow excellence, what would become of the noblest principles and productions of astronomy, natural philosophy, and mechanics ? what rare work would such critics make with the noblest productions of painting, architecture, and statuary, with the *Cartoons*, or the *Rotunda*, or the *Colossus of Rhodes*, upon the same principles ? when instead of examining the beauty, the grandeur, and the symmetry of the whole, they quarreled with the filing, the polishing, or the colouring of some minute part, and disclaimed the whole upon that account. Such little minds have no ideas of those bold and judicious neglects which are oftentimes the surest marks of a great genius : ill would it fare with mastery and magnificence, with the noblest productions of nature, and art, in the estimation of such mortals ; as well as with the ways and
works

works of GOD, recorded in the scriptures! but with this difference, that upon a farther, and stricter inquiry, the ways, and works, and word of GOD, are found not to ground so much as the pretence of any degree of real negligence or defect, or inaccuracy, to support the infidel's cavils against them. For example, one of these great geniuses is very witty upon the story of *Balaam*, and never met with any thing so ridiculous, as the speaking of an *ass*! this poor creature forgetteth, that the organs of all animals are equally vocal in the hand of omnipotence! and is angry that GOD should be said to do that by a brute, which he himself might do in some degree, by many of the inferior creatures; which are every day taught to speak. As for the decorum and consistency of the thing, it is in truth no more than GOD's making an *ass* do in fact, what *Æsop* might make him do in fable, upon a
proper

proper occasion, with great beauty, and propriety: and perhaps upon a candid inquiry, it will not be easy to conceive, how stupid obstinacy, and brutal rage, could be more properly, or more effectually reprov'd, than from the mouth of such a creature.

Another quarrels with the sanctions of the divine laws, laid down in the scriptures: and positively pronounceth, and insisteth upon it, that a being infinitely good, cannot punish. When it is evident to a demonstration, that a governor of the world, that did not punish (and that too so dreadfully as to deter from evil) could neither be infinitely, nor so much as tolerably good, because such a conduct, would leave the best beings in the world, a prey to the worst: which it cannot be consistent with any degree of goodness to permit. How fine and how just an address is that
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of the *Psalmist*, to men of this character!

Take heed ye unwise, among the people, O ye fools, when will ye understand? he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that made the eye, shall he not see? or he that nurtureth the heathen, it is he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he punish? Psalm xciv. 8, 9, 10.

The same great genius is very angry that GOD should be said to command the *Israelites* to spoil the *Egyptians*: What, GOD command injustice? impossible!

It is indeed impossible that GOD should be unjust, or command injustice: but if it be considered that the children of *Israel* were a free people, invited to, and fairly possessed of one of the richest regions of *Egypt*, and afterwards most injuriously harassed and oppressed by the *Egyptians*, the direction of GOD at their departure, will justly be regarded not

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as a robbery, but a retribution. But supposing this were not the case: it is in truth, no more impossible or iniquitous that GOD should command the *Israelites to spoil the Egyptians*, than it would be in a nobleman to give any one in this audience a bill upon his steward for any sum he thought fit to bestow upon him. Nor doth it require any more than common sense to see the equity of the conduct in one instance, as well as in the other. But the truth is, religion may say of reason, as *Tully* doth of *Rome*: it was the glory of *Cicero*, that his enemies were the enemies of the commonwealth: it is the glory of the christian religion, that her enemies are the enemies of common sense.

I have here mentioned three, as material, as wise, and as important objections against the truth of the scriptures, as I ever yet met with, in the writings of those great men, who
so

so gloriously distinguish themselves by the high appellation of free-thinkers. And did the time permit, it were easy to instance in others. And if God enable me, I will consider of them, upon other occasions. In the mean time, I beg your patience for a few moments, upon the second head of this discourse. To wit, the nature, and completion of the prophesy in my text, *there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts.*

That the wisest and most important institutions should at any time be the objects of ridicule to light libertines, and abandoned miscreants, hath nothing extraordinary or surprising in it. That the christian religion, at its first appearance in the world, should meet with opposition of every kind, is not much to be wondered. A religion that opposed itself to the passions, prejudices, and corruptions of the whole world around it, could not
fail

fail to be much maligned, before it was rightly understood. And therefore one need not wonder to find it early, and eagerly attacked, by a *Lucian*, a *Porphyry*, and a *Celsus*. But when it is sufficiently explained, and thoroughly understood, and not only proved, but allowed to have established the noblest system of morality, and theology, that ever the world was blessed with; the most conducive to human happiness, the most perfective of human nature, and the most worthy the perfection and purity of Almighty God! that such a religion, at this time of day, and in a christian country, when it hath not only the advantage of proof, but of prejudice too on its side; should yet be seriously reviled, and deliberately ridiculed by reasonable creatures, and professed lovers of truth, and of mankind! This I own, is matter of as much astonishment to me, as the most surprising revolution, or phenomenon,

menon, or event, I ever yet saw, or read, or heard of. And therefore, the foreseeing, and foretelling this event, in these circumstances, was only within his reach, who *searcheth the secrets of all hearts, and seeth the thoughts afar off*: and the best way of accounting for this strange conduct, is, by considering it, as the dreadfulest effect of that signal infatuation, which G O D, in judgment, and in justice, suffereth any of his subjects to fall into, for their sins. In them is clearly fulfilled, as formerly in the *Jews*, that dreadful judgment of G O D, denounced by *Esaïas*, and applied by our blessed Saviour in the xiiiith Chapter of *St. Matthew*. *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; least at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear*

hear with their ears, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

But however these men may be insensible to their own, infatuate stupidity in other respects; one instance of it, is so glaring, that it is not possible they can reflect upon it, without shame and self-conviction: and that is, that whilst these *scoffers* are endeavouring to overthrow revelation, they are in truth establishing it. Whilst they imagine they are destroying the christian religion, they are in reality but fulfilling a christian prophecy*! these rebels to their maker, are like the meanest rebels to their prince, their impotent opposition doth but confirm and establish the dominion it was intended to overthrow. This is the peculiar felicity of the christian religion; as it is the peculiar privilege of Jesus Christ, to *make his foes his*
H *footstool:*

* The prophecy in the text.

98 *A plain Inquiry, &c.*

footstool : to raise him higher on his throne, and fix him firmer in it, *To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N V.

The Immortality of the Soul proved
from Natural Philosophy and
Reason.

St. Matthew, Chap. x. Ver. 28.

*And fear not them that kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul ;
but rather fear him who is able to
destroy both soul and body in hell.*

IN this text there is a plain distinction made between the soul and the body ; as beings of different natures, and perfections : the one perishable, and capable of external injuries ; the other impassable, and immortal. And indeed the im-

mortality of the soul is so clearly revealed in the gospel, and the truth of that gospel so clearly and incontestably demonstrated; that this doctrine is not capable of greater evidence and certainty than it is already supported with.

However, forasmuch as some men are so scrupulous in all points of religious belief, that they can assent to no truth which is not supported by reason, as well as revelation; therefore the business of this discourse shall be, to lay before you some of the principal proofs and arguments for the immortality of the soul, that are drawn from reason: and I hope in the progress of these proofs, to make it appear to you, that they who assert this doctrine, are, in so doing, as much better philosophers than those that deny it, as they are better christians.

First then, that we all bear about us a body, and that this body hath

several qualities, modes and properties common to the whole mass of matter, that is, common to all other bodies, such as bulk, figure, extension, solidity, and impenetrability, does not need a proof. That we have also a thinking principle within us, is evident from the best proof in the world ; to wit, consciousness and experience. That is, that we have all within us a thinking principle that directs our actions, and either censures or applauds them as they are good or evil. That this principle hath several qualities, modes and properties of a peculiar nature ; such as perception, willing, doubting, denying, judging, reflecting, remembering, and the like, is evident from the same experience. Now I believe it will be allowed that there is no greater demonstration that any two things are of different natures, than when it appears that their qualities and properties are intirely different : that the qualities, modes and proper-

ties of the one, are inconsistent with, and cannot be affirmed of the modes and properties of the other, without absurdity. For example, there cannot be a better proof that a circle is not a square, or a square a circle, than that the properties of a circle cannot be applied to, or affirmed of the properties of a square, nor the properties of a square affirmed of the properties of a circle, without absurdity and contradiction. If then the properties of body, cannot be applied to the properties of that thinking principle within us, nor the properties of that thinking principle applied to the properties of body, without absurdity and contradiction, then that thinking principle within us cannot be body. For instance,

The properties of the thinking principle within us, are these ; perceiving, doubting, denying, willing, consenting, dissenting, judging, reflecting, remembering, &c. And the

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the properties of bodies are colour, figure, extention, bulk, and weight; and such as result from these; as smoothness, roughness, hardness, softness, &c. Now let any man examine whether the properties of the thinking principle within him are any way consistent with the properties of bodies, or can be applied to them. For example hath a doubt or a denial, or judgment, any colour or figure, or extention? can we properly say a white doubt or a scarlet denial, or a square judgment? a reflection of a foot long, or a foot broad, or of a pound weight. If this cannot be said, without absurdity and contradiction, then it is evident that this thinking principle within us, is of a nature as different from body, as its properties and affections are from the properties and affections of body; or in other words, that this thinking principle within us, which we call soul, or spirit,

rit, is of a quite different nature from body; and is therefore as the philosophers express it, *immaterial*. That is, of a very different nature from any bodily substance.

If any man quarrel with this kind of proof, let him remember, that it is the same that is often urged in proof of mathematical problems: and with sufficient evidence and approbation. That is, it is allowed in that science which admits of the greatest certainty of any science under the sun. Which nevertheless requires no greater evidence of the truth of any position than that the contrary to it, is absurd and contradictory.

But it may be objected, that tho' thinking be not a property, or mode, or affection of matter, as such, yet who will say that GOD cannot superadd a power of thinking to any system of matter rightly disposed?

This is Mr. *Locke's* objection: and he himself thought it so weak, as to
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own that the highest probability was on the other side : but if this learned gentleman had thoroughly considered the true principles of natural philosophy, he would have learned, that it was highly unjustifiable to ascribe any property to any thing, which observation and experience did not discover to belong to that thing : and that to call in the power of GOD to support what he himself thought the highest improbability, was at best, a very weak, and unphilosophical subterfuge. However, if this author means that GOD can super-add to any body something that is not body, we will readily own that he can : so hath he added the reasonable soul to these houses of clay which we bear about us. But if by a power of thinking this author means some new property of matter, which it had not before; that supposition will easily be shewn to be very absurd. First then, without
pre-

presuming to limit the power of GOD, I shall beg leave to answer to this objection, that if GOD could make matter think, yet it is impossible that, in the present state of things, he should oblige us to believe that it doth think: because it is a contradiction to those ideas he himself hath given us of it. I will appeal to all mankind, whether the idea they have of matter, or in other words of that substance of which all bodies are composed, be not, that it is a lifeless, extended, unactive, passive principle: and whether the idea they have of that thinking principle within them, be not, that it is an active, living, unextended principle: so that these two are privatively opposite, and as plainly inconsistent, as light and darkness. And therefore with great submission, this tenet is as absurd in philosophy as transubstantiation in religion. We both move and reason from ourselves, which plainly implies

implies the power of motion within ourselves : and this is a power absolutely inconsistent with the passive inert nature of matter ; or as the philosophers call it, that *vis inertiae*, that power by which all bodies so far from having a principle of motion within themselves, have a natural opposition and resistance to motion. Therefore, as long as our first idea of matter includes in it a passive, inert nature, it includes also an utter incapacity of thought.

Again, freedom, and liberty to act, or cease from acting, to apply ourselves to contrary motions, and purposes, is a clear argument against the materiality of the soul : for all matter, as far as can be perceived by the most discerning and curious observers of nature, is acted by certain fixed, necessary, invariable laws of motion : and therefore how that which is a necessary passive principle, and tied down to known, necessary laws,

laws, can be the source of that freedom and spontaneity we feel in ourselves, is utterly unintelligible; or to speak more freely, is absurd and contradictory.

Fourthly, If there be any such thing as a thinking system of matter, I believe it will easily be allowed, that it is that we bear about us: and yet I think it is evident that this body of ours, neither thinks in the whole, nor in its parts; for consciousness and reflection are essential to thought; and therefore if this body of ours thought, it must of necessity be conscious to itself that it did think: whereas it is so far otherwise, that we are conscious to ourselves, and convinced that it doth not think.

Farther yet. It is evident that the affections of matter are inseparable from figure and extention: nor can we conceive it possible even for almighty power to superadd any new property

property to matter that must not be necessarily connected to these two: that is, that must not of necessity be figured, and extended: therefore if thought and its modes be super-added to matter, they must of necessity be figured and extended: and whether they are so I appeal to the observation and experience of all mankind.

In the last place, I believe it will be allowed me that our ideas or thoughts are immaterial; that is, are not bodily substances; at least none ever imagined there was any thing corporeal in a doubt, or a denial; in a judgment, or an assent: besides, that, if our thoughts were material, where could they be lodged? how infinitely complicated and extended must that material mind be, to be able to contain those immense volumes of learning, which some men have treasured up in their souls! if therefore our ideas be immaterial,

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as it is evident they are, then let any man tell, or so much as imagine how they can arise from a material subject, or be repositied in it.

From all this, I think it is very clearly evident, that this thinking principle within us, which we call our soul, is immaterial: that is, that it is not a body. And if immaterial, then indivisible; for divisibility is an affection of matter; and if indivisible, then it is one simple uncompounded essence; for parts and composition would imply divisibility; and if it be one simple uncompounded essence, then it is incapable of any injury from without: that is, it cannot be bruised, or burnt, or pierced, or rent in funder; for all these imply parts and divisibility; nor can it suffer from the fermentation and conflict of jarring principles within; for this too would imply a composition; and if it be liable to injury, neither from within, nor from without,

out, it is immortal. But when I say the soul is immortal, I would not have it imagined that I exempt it from the omnipotence of God: all that I mean by it, is, that it cannot perish as body doth. And that it is impossible for us to imagine how it can be destroyed, otherwise than by being annihilated by the divine power. Now if God never annihilates any of his creatures, if every part of his creation, be, as becomes the works of infinite wisdom, eternal, if not so much as one atom, if not so much as one single point of any bodily substance hath perished since the foundation of the world, as all philosophers agree that there hath not; then certainly we ought to be in no manner of pain for our souls. If vile, inert matter, if every clod of earth, if the lowest and basest part of the creation, be permanent and eternal, how much more shall that rational soul, which is the glory of this nether world,

world, be imperishable and immortal.

And thus you see some of those many clear and demonstrative reasons, upon which we assert the immateriality, and immortality of the soul; and that we are better philosophers in this respect, than those that assert it to be material and mortal, I hope will appear from the absurdities they necessarily conclude themselves under in so doing.

First, they must assert, that contradictory and inconsistent properties may subsist in the same subject, activity and inertness, freedom and necessity, perception, and insensibility. That though all the properties of all bodies are inseparable from figure and extension, yet the soul may be a body with properties that have no relation to figure or extension; otherwise we should speak with great propriety and good sense, if we reasoned gravely of figured doubts, scarlet remembrances,

brances, reflexions of a foot long, and perceptions of an ell wide.

Secondly, they must assert that there may be such a thing, as a thinking system devoid of consciousness or reflection: that is, a thinking system that cannot think.

Thirdly, that, matter, which is a necessary principle, and tied down to fixed and invariable laws, can yet be the fountain of that freedom and spontaneity which we experience in ourselves.

Fourthly, that, ideas or thoughts which are immaterial, may yet arise from, and be repositied in a material subject. And

Lastly, that tho' every part and portion of the creation be eternal, yet that which is impassible and incorruptible, that which is the glory and end of the whole, shall perish and cease to be.

But to proceed.

The next argument that I shall urge for the immortality of the soul, is the consent of mankind upon this head. And this proves it, either the voice of nature, or else the effect of an universal tradition, from an original pair. For though some nations have been reported to be so far sunk into ignorance and barbarity, as to have no remains of religion amongst them; no notion of a deity, of the immortality of the soul, or of future rewards and punishments, yet after-accounts of the same countries, have made it appear, that these were the reports of men of small observation, and no skill in the languages and manners of those they described. But supposing these accounts to be true, yet when it is allowed that this belief obtains among all the more knowing and polished parts of the world, all the inference that can be made from the ignorance of a few upon this point, is only this. That

this doctrine of the immortality of the soul is so agreeable to the reason of mankind, that they must be greatly degenerated from the dignity and perfection of human nature, and sunk into barbarism and brutality that are unacquainted with it. Nor can such exceptions as these, hinder it from being the voice of nature: forasmuch as nature is best seen in her most perfect productions. And therefore when we find all the most knowing part of mankind agreed in this point, we are under a necessity, as I before observed, of concluding one of these two things: either first, that this doctrine is highly reasonable, and supported by such evidences as have been sufficient to persuade the wisest and best men in all ages; or secondly, that it proceeded from an universal tradition, and that tradition from an original pair, who derived their knowledge either from revelation, or the evi-

dence of reason, or both. And tho' it were by tradition, yet if it had not been founded in the sense of nature, it is not easy to conceive how it could have continued so universally in the world, even after all memory of its original was lost, and expired from amongst men.

Again, the mixed nature of the human pleasures plainly demonstrates a composition in our beings: the pleasures of the body depend wholly upon it, and die with it: the pleasures of the mind, such as virtue, wisdom, and knowledge, have no kind of relation to the body; otherwise than as the mind resides in it: and are so perfectly distinct from all the pleasures of sense, that they are oftentimes repugnant to, and utterly inconsistent with them. If then the mind hath a felicity distinct from the body, it must also have a principle of life distinct from it too: for all happiness results from the principle of
31 life,

life, and is in proportion to it : and therefore if the soul have a happiness distinct from the body, it must also have a principle of life distinct from it too. And if so, then it can live without it, and separate from it : and to pursue this argument, doth not the soul (saith *Plato*) reason best, when it is seclused as much as possible from all commerce with the body ? when it is neither disturbed with sounds, or sights ; with bodily pleasure or pain ; but retires as it were within itself ; and is wholly employed in its own contemplations ? Do not the interventions of sense, and sensible objects, obstruct these contemplations ? Is not the body a clog and impediment to us, in our rational pursuits ? Is it not then a clear dictate of reason, that we shall think and contemplate better, when we are rid of these senses, and this clog ?

If we add to all this, the hindrance the passions give us in our pursuit of knowledge; and the mixture of folly and sensible regards that blend themselves with the thoughts of the most refined and abstracted thinkers; we shall find, that as we have no perfect knowledge, so have we (all things considered) very little of pure and unmixed truth on this side the grave: and since truth and knowledge are the aim and purpose of the soul, either it never attains the true end of its being, (and then it is the only thing in nature that doth not) or else it must attain it after this life. Why are we urged to the pursuit and love of truth, why inclined and impelled to search out the secrets of nature, to fathom the depths of science, to admire and to imitate the wisdom and the goodness of GOD? To what purpose this apparatus of abilities capable of eternal improvement? to what purpose objects of infinite perfection

fection and inexhaustible scrutiny fitted, to those abilities, if the soul be not immortal? All this is absurd and inconsistent, if we must die in the infancy of both our knowledge and our virtue. And therefore it is as utterly incredible, that God should furnish out a creature with all things accommodate to an eternal duration, when he intended him only for a temporary evanescent existence. I say this is as utterly incredible, as that he should endow us with hunger and thirst, and strong appetites of every kind, and prepare proper and suitable objects for all those appetites, and yet at the same time make it utterly impossible for us to gratify any one of them. In one word, it is a direct contradiction, both to the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God.

And this leads us to another argument for the immortality of the soul, drawn from the strong desire

of immortality implanted in our nature by Almighty God: and the argument from it, is this:

All the desires of nature have objects suited to them: and therefore since the desire of immortality is a desire of nature, it must also have an object suitable to it: and if it have not such an object, then it is ill placed, and consequently must argue the author of nature either of weakness or imposture: both which are equally to be removed from him: If there be no futurity, whence this anxious sollicitude about it? this strange concern for what shall be hereafter! Is not the condition of brutes infinitely preferable upon this supposition! they enjoy the present, without any anxious foretaste or fear of the future: whereas (if the soul be not immortal) we are tormented with fears that have no foundation, and with desires that have no object. Is this the privilege of humanity? *privi-*

privilege, to be at once anxious and insatiable ! Is this our boasted pre-eminence, to be more miserable and more deluded than the beasts that perish ?

In vain does the atheist object, that this desire of immortality cannot be from nature, because he desires against it, and wishes his being may terminate with his life. Alas, this is but a poor subterfuge, and we may answer it, by an appeal to his own conscience, whether his dread of futurity be not as great as his desire of annihilation ? we may also answer it, by an appeal to the consciences of all mankind, whether the desire of destruction be not directly against nature ? But however, the reason of this desire in some people is easily accounted for : the desire of happiness, is naturally connected to the desire of being ; and therefore when men have forfeited all their hopes of happiness, it is natural their
desire

desire of being should expire with it : thus also it is with life : all men naturally desire life, and abhor death ; however, it may happen, that a man may be so loaded with misery as to be weary of life, and wish for death ; and yet will any man say that the desire of life is not a natural desire, because some men may be so unhappy as to desire against it ? No surely. Therefore if the accidental hatred of life be no argument against its being naturally desirable, neither can some mens abhorrence of immortality, be any proof that the desire of it is not strongly founded in nature.

The compass of this discourse will not allow me to pursue these and the remaining arguments for the immortality of the soul, to their full extent : and therefore I shall content myself to tell you, that they are taken from the power of conscience. From our own nature as free agents. The nature of good and evil. The unequal

equal condition of virtue in this world: and the necessity of a future retribution, in consequence of the power and justice and goodness of GOD. Why are we reproached, why are we made wretched by the reflexions of our own breasts, even at the hour of death, if we have no account to give of the evil of our doings after death!

Why are we formed to love virtue, why are we so often urged to the practice of it, at the hazard of our lives, and all our earthly happiness, if all our labours in the service of it are to be unrewarded, and all our losses unrepaired!

Upon the whole, I beseech you, my brethren, to compare the proofs for the immortality of the soul, now laid before you, with the absurdities of the contrary opinion, to remember, that the christian believes, on the side of philosophy, with the desires of nature, with the consent of mankind,

kind, with the natural sense of conscience, with the interests of virtue, and with the justice and goodness of GOD. Whereas the infidel believes, at least pretends to believe, against philosophy, against nature, against the consent of mankind, against the interests of virtue, against the sense of conscience, and against the divine justice and goodness. And all these confirmed and ascertained by a revelation from heaven. Let any man then fairly state the arguments and the evidence on both sides, and then try if he can balance one moment upon the folly of infidelity, and the wisdom of a philosophic and christian faith.

The conclusion that *Plato* draws from establishing the immortality of the soul, is very remarkable: and I also shall beg leave to conclude with it: “ If then (saith that great philosopher) the soul be immortal, it doth not only demand our earnest
“ care

“ care for the little space which we
“ call life, but for the whole extent
“ of time. And certainly the dan-
“ ger of neglecting the soul, is very
“ dreadful. If (saith he) death
“ were a dissolution of the whole
“ man, it would be the most advan-
“ tageous thing that could befall the
“ wicked: when they should be
“ freed at once, from their body,
“ and their guilt, and their depra-
“ vity die with their spirit: but now,
“ forasmuch as the soul is immortal,
“ and incorruptible, there is no o-
“ ther possible method for escaping
“ the evils that await wickedness;
“ there is no other security, but that
“ which results from goodness, and
“ a rational conduct.” Thus that
great philosopher.

And elsewhere he tells us, that
we ought to spare no pains for the
attainment of virtue. “ And adds
“ the reason, for it is a noble con-
“ tention, and a mighty hope. Do
“ not

“not they, (says he) who contend
 “for victory in the race, and in the
 “palæstra, enure themselves to tem-
 “perance and abstinence? and shall
 “it be impossible for those that are
 “engaged in the study of virtue, to
 “play the men, and get the better
 “of their appetites.” And St. *Paul*
 in the same way of thinking. But
 with much stronger and nobler en-
 forcements in Chap. ix. 1 Ep. Cor.
Know ye not (saith he) that they
which run in a race run all, but one
receiveth the prize, so run that ye
may obtain. That is, in earthly
 races, all run, though but one can
 win the prize; but in the christian
 course, all that contend shall con-
 quer. All that run with patience
 the race that is set before them,
 shall be sure of the immortal re-
 ward, and crown of conquest. He
 then adds, *every man that striveth*
for the mastery is temperate in all
things;
 200

things, now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. Which that we all may one day obtain at the hand of God, he of his infinite mercy grant through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

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Christ. the merits and mediation of Jesus of his infinite mercy grant through day obtain at the hand of God, he will. Which that we all may one-
republic crown but we are unworthy-
things, were they he is to obtain a cor-

S E R M O N VI.

The Nature, Possibility, Eternity,
and Justice of Hell Torments
clearly explained and proved ;
and the Objections to them fully
answered.

St. *Matthew*, Chap. x. Ver. 28.

*And fear not them which kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul ;
but rather fear him which is able to
destroy both soul and body in hell.*

THE distinct nature of the soul,
its independency upon the bo-
dy, and its immortality, are I think
implied with sufficient evidence in
these words. And therefore the bu-
siness of this discourse shall be to in-
quire into one condition of it in its

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separate

separate state : to wit, into the nature of those punishments which our holy religion assures us shall be the portion of the wicked in another world.

Some indeed have been so weak as to conclude from these words that the souls of sinners should be annihilated in hell ; little considering, that the threat would then be senseless and insignificant ; because then, there would be as much reason to fear men that could put an end to our being in this world, as to fear GOD who would only annihilate our souls in another. Nay in truth, there would be more reason to fear men, that could distress and torment us in this world, than to fear GOD who could only put an end to those distresses and torments in the next. Whereas the text supposes a vast disparity on the other side ; and plainly implies that we ought not to fear men, who can only kill the body, in comparison

son of that mighty being, *who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Besides this, it is evident from many places of the holy scriptures, that the original word (*απολεσαι*) which we render to *destroy*, signifies no more than bringing misery and calamity upon the person it is applied to, as appears from St. Paul's precept to deliver up the incestuous person to *satan, for the destruction*, that is, for the punishment of the flesh: and that passage in the first of St. Mark, where the unclean spirit asks our blessed Saviour, *Art thou come to destroy us?* explained from a parallel text in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, *Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Though even without these proofs, the distinction made in the text between the word (*αποκλειναι*) which signifies to *kill*, and the word (*απολεσαι*) which signifies to *destroy*, is clear and satisfactory. *Fear not them which kill the*
K 2 *body,*

body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Forasmuch then as it is manifest that the destruction in the text signifies calamity and torment, the business of this discourse shall be, to inquire,

First, into the nature of that torment.

Secondly, to shew the possibility of it.

And thirdly, the justice.

First then, as to the nature of that torment which awaits the wicked in hell, it is expressed in scripture by a worm, and a fire: *a worm that never dieth, and a fire that is never quenched.*

By the worm, is meant that sting of conscience, that remorse and anguish of soul, which wicked men shall feel in another world for all the evils they committed in this: and which, GOD, by an unalterable

decree, hath made the inseparable companions of guilt.

By the fire, we can understand nothing, but that material elemental fire, which we know to be the instrument of the most quick and exquisite torment, that we can possibly conceive in this world.

And as to the duration of both these, the scriptures every where assure us, that it shall be eternal. To this purpose are those expressions, *The wicked shall go into everlasting fire.* And in the Epistle of Jude, *they shall suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire*; and in many other places of the scriptures.

But it is objected, that frequently throughout the scriptures, *eternal*, and *everlasting*, are used to signify only a limited duration: as when God saith, he will make *Jerusalem an eternal excellency*; and that he will give the land of *Canaan* to the

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children of Israel for an everlasting inheritance.

I answer, these promises are all conditional, and proposed as rewards of obedience ; and therefore altho' they should be granted not figurative, but intended in the literal extent and import of the words, yet since the conditions of those promises were not performed, there can be no imputation upon the justice and veracity of G O D for not fulfilling them : whereas, had those conditions been performed, and G O D had then failed of fulfilling his promise, such an imputation had been utterly unavoidable.

Forasmuch then, as this is exactly the case, with regard to eternal rewards and punishments, our blessed Saviour hath expressly declared that *they that have done evil, shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life* : this is a
condi-

conditional declaration, and if the conditions of it be fulfilled, the declaration must of necessity take effect, otherwise it is impossible to vindicate the veracity and justice of God, from such imputations, as ought not to be mentioned. And therefore it is, that our blessed Saviour, to obviate all possibility of doubt, or evasion upon his thead; repeats, and inculcates the eternity of hell torments, no less than three times, without interruption; in the ninth chapter of St. *Mark's* gospel, at the forty-third and following verses: where speaking of those corruptions that must be mortified, and those darling desires that must be parted with, must be torn away from the heart, rather than indulged in sin; he tells us, *If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. By this means, industriously cutting off all hope, and prospect of this punishment being only appointed for a limited duration.

More than this, in the xxvth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, at the 46th Verse, after our blessed Saviour had denounced the Sentence that should be passed upon the wicked at the last day in the 41st Verse. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*

fire. And added the reasons of that sentence, he concludes in this manner; *and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* Now forasmuch as the happiness here promised to the righteous, is on all hands agreed to be truly and strictly eternal; the punishment which is opposed to it, must of necessity be so too.

But it is objected, by a great man, that there is this difference, between promises and threats; that a promise confers a right upon another person; and consequently, he that promiseth, is obliged to perform. Whereas he that threatneth, hath still the power of execution in his own hands; and may, without injury, remit as much of the punishment as he pleaseth.

To this it may be answered, that it is ill arguing from the conduct of giddy and unstable men, to the conduct of that GOD, *in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.*

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The threatnings of men, are for the most part light, and vain ; the effects of passion, and error ; and therefore they are not always obliged to execute them. Quite otherwise ; they are oftentimes obliged not to execute them : whereas the threatnings of God, are solemn declarations of unerring wisdom, and dispassionate justice ! and consequently, can in no wise admit to be paralleled with the threats of men. Besides this, the threatnings of God are denounced by him, in his legislative capacity ; as sovereign judge and governor of the earth : they are penalties of laws ; and how they can be remitted, when the violation of those laws comes to be vindicated, at the day of judgment, is impossible to conceive.

The plain design of appointing that great and terrible day, is, to reward and punish his creation, according to their observance or transgression

sion of those laws, which he hath given. And that too, in such a manner, as that the sentence then denounced, will probably remain a monument of the terror and certainty, of divine justice to succeeding creations ; to all eternity ! However, thus much is certain ; that it is intended to vindicate and establish the authority of God, to the confusion of those that now insult, and dispute, and deny it. And that God can vindicate and establish his authority, by shewing that his terrors are a bugbear, and his threatnings insignificant, is altogether senseless and absurd. Even the light of nature could discover, that some men must be punished in another world, not for amendment, but example. And this, *Plato* expressly mentions in his *Gorgia*. And probably the same way of thinking led him into his distinction of sins *curable* and *incurable*,

rable, in the first book of his Republic.

It is farther urged, that there are many divine threats mentioned in the scriptures, which never were fulfilled. As in the case of *Ninive*, and many others ; and consequently, that GOD is not obliged to execute his threats.

To this I answer, that all those threats are plainly conditional : and when the condition was fulfilled, they ceased of course. And this appears from GOD's own declaration : *For at what instant I shall speak* (saith GOD) *concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it : if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them,* Jer. xviii. 7, 8. It is evident from hence, that these threats are conditional ; and so likewise the denunciations of eternal

eternal vengeance are conditional : and therefore if we repent and forsake our sins, will also become void and of no effect. If we forsake our sins, as the *Ninevites* did, we shall, without question, escape eternal damnation, as they did temporal punishment: otherwise, our destruction will be as inevitable, as without repentance, theirs certainly had been. And to convince you that GOD will not be remiss in the execution of his threats, let us remember, that when *Samuel* denounced GOD's wrath against *Saul*, and that the kingdom was rent from him, for his disobedience in relation to *Amaleck* ; he adds, *The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent ; for he is not a man, that he should repent.* Clearly implying, that the justice and veracity of GOD were concerned in inflicting a punishment, which he had absolutely denounced ; and the event declared it to be so.

Again, when God declared that none of those which had murmured against him in the wilderness, should enter into the land of *Canaan*, he subjoins : *I the Lord have said it, I will surely do it.* Plainly implying, that his decrees are immutable ; and will have their effect. And when we consider that *Canaan* was an emblem of heaven, we shall have the more reason to be confirmed in this persuasion, that disobedience, and obstinate impenitence, will eternally exclude us from the mansions of bliss.

And thus having shewn you, the nature, and duration of those torments, which shall be the portion of wicked men in another world : I proceed in the next place, to shew the possibility of them. In opposition to that objection with which some pretenders to wisdom are so apt to insult believers : to wit, that it is impossible for these bodies of ours to subsist many hours in flames
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of fire ; and therefore, much less can they be conceived capable of eternal duration, in that destructive element.

To this, I shall beg leave to answer ; by asking these men, whether they can demonstrate, that the same laws must, and will, certainly, and continually obtain, in another world, in relation to the solidity and continuity of our bodies, that obtain at present in this. If they cannot demonstrate this, their objection is of no force, since the alteration of one old law, or the addition of one new one, destroys their whole objection. And whether it is not possible for God to alter, or increase his own laws ; or rather, whether it is not reasonable to think, that he hath ordained, that different laws should obtain in different worlds ; let any man of common understanding judge.

Again, if these men were moderately skilled in the knowledge of nature ;

ture ; they could not but know that light and body are convertible into one another ; that is, light is convertible into bodies of any other kind ; and bodies of any kind whatsoever, are convertible into light. And forasmuch as all light is fire, therefore fire and body are convertible into one another ; that is, all bodies are capable of being turned into fire, and all fire, that is, all ignite bodies capable of being turned into bodies of any other nature. And therefore to make any body capable of burning to all eternity, there needs no more than the establishing of this one law, that all those of its parts that are converted into fire should immediately be converted into the substance of the body again. By this means, our bodies may subsist to all eternity in the flames of hell, by a perpetual circulation of their own parts, of body into fire, and fire into body ; insomuch, that all the wastes that
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are committed in the body by that destructive element will immediately be supplied by it again : and this gives a clear light into that obscure passage in the ixth Chapter of St. Mark's gospel at the 49th Verse. Where our blessed Saviour speaking of the eternity of hell torments, of *the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.* He adds, as a reason and proof of the eternal duration of those torments *for every one,* (that is, every one that thus offends) *shall be salted with fire ;* that is, every wicked man that is cast into hell shall be seasoned with fire, in such a manner, as that the very element, which, in this world, would destroy his body, shall then preserve it, and render it inconsumable. And therefore he may properly be said to *be salted with fire ;* in allusion to that known property of salt, which is to preserve those

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things that it is applied to, from corruption*.

Besides all this, we should remember, that at the resurrection, our bodies are to be *changed, and raised in incorruption*. They shall then cease to be perishable as they now are; and shall become permanent, and of perpetual duration; in order to be accommodated to the nature of that immortal soul from which they are never more to be parted. And therefore to object to their eternal duration in fire, in another world, from their condition in this, is altogether irrational.

If any one imagine any part of the foregoing reasoning, clear as it is, to be yet too remote from sense, let me desire him to consider the sun; that mighty body of fire, that hath subsisted so many thousands of years, in

* If any one hath a mind to be farther satisfied in this interpretation, let him consult Dr. *Whitby's* comment upon the place.

one glowing flame, without any visible fuel, and yet without the least visible diminution? and might, without question, subsist after the same manner, if it pleased GOD, to all eternity. Let him consider the *Asbestos*, mentioned by *Pliny*, and well known to the naturalists of the present age, which is incapable of diminution, or decay, from the most intense fire*, and then think whether it be not possible for GOD, to do that in the human body, in another world; which he hath done in such very remarkable instances in this.

And thus having shewn you the nature and the possibility of eternal torments, I proceed in the last place to inquire into the justice of them.

In the first place then, I apprehend, that such a conduct as would

* Or that wood of the *Moluccas* mentioned by travelers of undoubted credit, which being laid in the fire burns, sparkles, and flames, yet consumes not. *Mandelsø's travels*, p. 133.

be accounted wise and just in a wise and righteous ruler in this world, ought not to be deemed unwise, or unjust, in the great governor of the universe. Now, I appeal to common sense, whether the condemning a wicked villain to close confinement, and hard labour, during the whole course of his life; and perhaps (at proper intervals) lashes, or other chastisements best suited to his guilt; might not, in many cases, well become the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of the best, the wisest, and the justest governor upon earth? and is not this punishing for life? Now suppose that criminal as long-lived as any of the *Antediluvians*; would this make any alteration in the justice of the sentence? might not an *Antediluvian* be as justly condemned for life as one of us? and might not such confinement have been as necessary for the terror of evil doers, then, as now?

And will not the same reason hold good, on supposition that such a criminal were to live two thousand, or ten thousand years, or twice or ten times as long? there might still be good reason for confining him for life: nay, supposing him incorrigibly wicked, the reasons of his confinement, and chastisement will still continue, and strengthen, in proportion to his longevity; to prevent the ill effects of his evil influence and example: and shall we deem it unjust in God, to punish for life? temporal magistrates punish for life, that is, for a few years, for the prevention of temporary evils; and the terror of beings who can live in this world but a few years. And for the same reason, God Almighty punisheth for life, in another world; for the prevention of eternal evil: and the terror of beings that are to live for ever.

May it be found finally consistent with the infinite goodness, and justice of God ; that the eternally chastised, may bear no greater proportion to the other inhabitants of eternity, than the criminals in goals, galleys, work-houses, and houses of correction, bear to the other inhabitants on earth !

Thus much is certain : that their punishments will be in proportion to their guilt. For we are assured that some shall receive *more*, some *fewer stripes* : and it is probable that the chastisements will fall heaviest upon those parts, which more immediately ministred, and allured to guilt.

The parable of *Lazarus*, and the rich man, doth I think justify this conjecture. The rich man's guilt was gluttony ; a continual self-indulgence in luxury of appetite, which excluded all humanity, and compassion.

Now the more immediate seat of his torment, is I think, clearly learn-
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ed from his petition to *Abraham*:
Father Abraham have mercy on me:
and send Lazarus, that he may dip
the tip of his finger in water, and
cool my tongue.

And possibly our Saviour may allude to something of this kind, in those monitions in the ixth Chapter of *St. Mark*. *If thine hand offend thee, cut it off: if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, &c.*

But secondly, justice requires, that the penalty assigned to the transgressing or disobeying of all laws, should be proportionable to the good that is to be obtained by the observance of them. For the nature, and end of government, clearly require, that, as reward and advantage should attend duty and obedience, so likewise that evil and inconvenience should await transgression, and disobedience, in the same proportion. Consequently that the penalties of laws that are calculated for infinite advantage,

should be such as might be sufficient to hinder the violation of those laws. And that nothing less than eternal vengeance could be a sufficient sanction against the violation of the divine laws, is evident ; because even that is too often ineffectual. If then everlasting happiness be the reward of obedience to the laws of GOD, then everlasting misery ought in justice to be the punishment of disobedience to them. And this argument at once cuts off all those cavils, about the proportion between temporal crimes and eternal punishments. For let these punishments but be considered as the penalties of laws, calculated for infinite and eternal good : and reason will immediately infer, that the penalties of all laws should be such as might best prevent the transgression and violation of them ; and enforce and secure to them a serious and awful observance. And therefore that nothing less than eternal

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nal and infinite evil could be a wise, a proper, or, in any sense, an adequate penalty in the case before us.

Besides, let it be considered upon whom these penalties are to be inflicted. Upon men in another world; upon beings in their nature immortal; *when this mortal shall have put on immortality.* That is, when their bodies are accommodated to the nature of their immortal souls. And to threaten such beings with temporal evils, in punishment of guilt, would be to threaten them, in a way utterly unworthy of the infinite wisdom and justice of GOD: would be full as insignificant, as if an earthly magistrate should threaten nothing but the slightest and shortest chastisements, for the greatest offences that could be committed; for murder, and incest, and blasphemy! for the highest and most continued transgressions, and obstinate insults upon
GOD,

GOD, and the public peace, for a series of years.

But farther yet, if the malignity of all habitual sin be infinite, then the punishment of all such sin may, and ought in justice to be so too. That is, if all habitual sinners (for such only are consigned to eternal perdition) commit infinite evil, then they all deserve infinite punishment. Now that all habitual sinners commit infinite evil, will appear, if we consider that no person can be guilty of habitual sin, without infecting others, either by his example, or allurements, or authority, or all together. And this will easily be allowed, if we consider first, that few sins can be habitually committed but in society; and secondly, that all sins are wonderfully infectious and catching: for evil hath this in common with good, that it is exceedingly diffusive and communicative.

And

And thirdly, that all persons that are guilty of habitual sin, are wonderfully industrious to propagate the evil, and to make proselytes to it: and are commonly so successful in their attempts, that we may justly apply to these, what our blessed Saviour saith to the *Pharisees*, *xxiii*d Chapter of *St. Matthew*, Verse 15. *They compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, they make him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves.* And therefore, woe unto them. If then one habitual sinner infects another, and that other a third, and so on, the original evil is quickly propagated to infinity; and consequently the author of it, is the author of infinite evil. And forasmuch as all habitual sinners are the authors of all that evil that is propagated by their means, therefore they are all authors of infinite evil. And consequently all deserve infinite punishment.

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If it be objected, that the progression of evil through a finite series of men, cannot be infinite, I desire it may be remembered, that mathematicians have demonstrated that motion becomes infinite in a progressive communication of it through a series of twenty bodies, and that the increase of evil in the communication of it may be vastly greater than the increase of motion can be. And this will appear, if we consider, first, the prodigious increase of evil in its communication : that converts to wickedness, generally speaking out-do their teachers. And secondly, that almost every act of sin is a complicated evil : is evil in almost every relation of life. And that sin, in this respect, resembles that fire which shall be its punishment : that it always gathers strength in its progress ; and increases as it proceeds : insomuch, that at length it becomes an evil of such multiplied malignity,

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as cannot be reduced within the compass of rules and proportions; but is unwieldy, and infinite.

If we add to all this, that habits of sin are never single: that all habits of sin derive such an infection upon the mind, as perverts the whole moral state of it: infomuch that scarce any one thought or act of such a one's life can be the effect of virtue and true religion: and that habitual sinners are seldom contented with single converts, but often spread their infection through vast numbers. I say, if we consider all this mighty mass of sin, swelling, and increasing in a prodigious proportion to the end of the world, and perhaps to all eternity. The guilt of one single sinner, (nay sometimes of one single sin) becomes such an immense evil, that the mind is lost and bewildered in the pursuit: and numbers fail to compute it.

But

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But here it may be objected, that if the evil of sin be so very great, how is it consistent with the justice of GOD to forgive it?

I answer, that this is indeed at first sight a hard question: for in reality, the difficulty now is, not how the justice of GOD can punish sin with eternal torments, but how it can remit them. But yet if we consider that all these offences are committed against GOD, and against his creatures, over whom he hath an absolute power; and that all governors may remit the greatest offences when it is consistent with the ends of government so to do: nay, that mercy engages them to do so. That it seems perfectly consistent with the ends of government, to spare a penitent, and reformed offender; or rather a good and useful subject, that once was an offender; for that is really the case of a true penitent: I say, if we consider all this, we shall find it consistent

sistent with the ends of government to forgive sin, upon a thorough reformation and repentance, though without such a reformation, it is utterly impossible, and inconsistent.

And thus I have endeavoured in as few words as the compass of this discourse would allow, to shew you the nature, the possibility, and the justice of eternal punishments. And more particularly I have endeavoured to establish the last of these upon a rational and solid foundation.

I might add to all this, that vice and wickedness of every kind hath a natural tendency to make its proselytes miserable, both in this world, and in the next. That wicked men acquire such habits of vice in this world, as are directly contrary to the beatitudes of heaven; and utterly inconsistent with them: and such as make them incapable of any but the society of cursed spirits. Nor is it any more possible, for evil men, to
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derive any pleasure from the society of angels and archangels, than it is for envy, and hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, to dwell with purity and peace, and universal benevolence.

I shall beg leave to mention one thing more, to the same purpose : which, if it doth not carry with it the strength and force of full demonstration, yet at least appears highly reasonable and just : the argument is this. If habitual and hardened sinners that have died in their guilt, are doing evil to all eternity, then is it but just they should suffer evil to all eternity. Now that they are doing evil to all eternity, seems reasonable to believe from the nature of habitual sin ; which gives the mind such a corrupt and perverse disposition, and such an aversion from God and goodness, as must continue with it to all eternity : and which, would itself be hell enough, if there were

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no other. For if the wicked man hated G O D in this world, when he received so many blessings and benefits from him, will he love him in the next, when he hath renounced him, and shut him out from his presence for ever ! if he hated virtue in this world, when it might have been of advantage to him, will he love it in the next, when it can be no more of use to him ! is it not more reasonable to believe, that he will fall into the same desperate condition, with those accursed spirits to whose society he is condemned ? that he will become like them, a monster of evil ; and will place his only remain of happiness, in rebellion, and revenge, and in doing despite to G O D and goodness as far as in him lieth to all eternity. And consequently that he will deserve and derive upon himself eternal punishment. And this brings me to consider the deplorable condition of such as are shut out

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from happiness and from the presence of GOD for ever.

The desire of happiness is founded in our being, and must last with it. Alas then, how dreadful is the condition of that man, who must live under all the effects of that strong desire, and at the same time under an utter impossibility of gratifying it in one single point, to all eternity! if *hope*, even *deferred*, *maketh the heart sick*, what excess of anguish must be the effect of hope irrecoverably disappointed? When *Cain* was shut out from the more immediate presence of GOD, he cried out, *my punishment is greater than I am able to bear, for from thy face shall I be hid*. If an exclusion from the presence and favour of GOD here, be an insupportable calamity to a thinking being, how dreadful will that sentence be at the last day, *depart from me, ye cursed*? The pangs of a guilty conscience are often piercing,

cing, and inconsolable even in this world ; amidst all the false hopes of amendment, and the hurry of business and diversion, that endeavour to alleviate and amuse them. Good GOD, how dreadful must all these be when they are awakened into all their terror ! and the soul hath nothing to divert it, from reflecting upon horror, and guilt, and everlasting perdition !

It cannot be denied, that an exemption from hell fire, would be a prospect of great consolation to wicked men at the hour of death ; and yet upon supposition that this could be obtained, it is evident to a demonstration, that they would be eternally, and insupportably miserable even after this. For if the escape of eternal evil be an infinite good, then, by the same parity of reason, the deprivation of eternal good will be an infinite evil ! So that altho' an exemption from infinite evil

might, at first, be matter of great consolation to a sinner; yet the sense of being bereft of infinite good, of losing, not only the prospect of his wonted happiness, but even of the highest and most consummate felicity, would even after that be an eternal, and intolerable affliction to his soul. This will be clear from a very familiar instance. Suppose the rich man in the gospel, upon his being taken out of this world, to be carried, not into hell; but into some other region: from whence, he had all the joys and glories of heaven in full prospect: but with a great gulf fixed between, which could not be passed over, from either side.

Suppose him in this situation, to see *Lazarus* (whom he would not have set to eat with his dogs) in full enjoyment of all those heavenly beatitudes; and himself eternally excluded. Supposing, that in this situation, he neither needed dogs to lick
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his sores ; nor water to cool his tongue in torment ; would he be happy for all that ? far from it ! for if the evil habits of the mind, contracted in this world, continue with it for ever, as undoubtedly they must : it is evident that remorse, rancour, and envy, would still raise worse sores and ulcers in his soul : and kindle a fire that never could be quenched. Take away then the flames of hell from a sinner, he will, he must be miserable, infinitely miserable, as long as you leave the beatitudes of heaven behind them ! How wretched, how unspeakably deplorable is the condition of that man, whom, a riddance from the torments of hell can never make happy ; and whom, even the beatitudes of heaven must make eternally miserable ! And is not every impenitent sinner this man ? And is not this consideration enough to strike that sinner dead !

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Yes ! this is the very best that an hardened sinner can hope, but alas, it is the least that he must endure : he must not only lose eternal good, but he must feel eternal evil. He must not only be deprived of the joys of heaven, but he must be immersed in the miseries of hell ; *into the fire that never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

From which dismal and intolerable doom, G O D, of his infinite mercy deliver us all, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ,

S E R-

S E R M O N VII.

The Possibility, Reasonableness, and
Certainty of the Resurrection,
clearly proved: and all the ob-
jections to it fully confuted.

I Cor. Chap. xv. Ver. 51, 52.

*Behold, I shew you a mystery! We
shall not all sleep, but we shall all
be changed, in a moment, in the
twinkling of an eye, at the last
trump: for the trumpet shall
sound, and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible, and we shall be
changed.*

I Know no one truth more clearly
demonstrable from the principles
of right reason, than, that the du-
ties of morality, which are of eternal

obligation, must, in consequence of the goodness, and justice of God, be certainly, and necessarily attended with rewards, and punishments, worthy the wisdom, the goodness, and the justice of God. And since those rewards and punishments are not adequately distributed in this world, where virtue is too often oppressed, and vice triumphs : from hence reason infers the necessity of a future state ; where the inequalities of this present life shall be adjusted, and virtue, and vice shall be rewarded, and punished, in the proportion, that is most suitable to the wisdom, and justice of that great being that governs the world. And this is so perfectly agreeable to the nature of moral duties, and the reason of mankind ; that *Plato*, in the tenth book of his laws, could from thence infer the necessity of a divine judgment, which none should escape. And that the gods, in consequence of their ha-

tred of vice, and love of virtue, must necessarily punish wicked men, and reward the good, both in this life, and after it.

Now, it is upon these principles, that the doctrine of the resurrection is evidenced to be just, and reasonable: for altho' it be in the number of those truths which unassisted reason could never discover; at least, could never ascertain to any sufficient degree of evidence; yet when once it is discovered, it appeareth so fit, and just; so, every way agreeable to the divine goodness, and justice, and to the nature of mankind, that one would think all unprejudiced persons must readily assent to it. However, since there are always in the world, who are ready to doubt and deny every religious truth, that is attended with the least difficulty, (altho' warranted by the testimony of GOD himself) and call every thing absurd and impossible which their
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narrow understandings cannot easily comprehend, nor their corrupt hearts assent to; therefore I shall endeavour in the following discourse, to show you,

First, that the resurrection is possible.

Secondly, that it is, from the nature and reason of things highly credible, and rational. And

Thirdly, that both our own nature, and the moral attributes of GOD do necessarily require it.

First then; I say the resurrection is possible.

If the resurrection were impossible, it must be so, either because no agent can be conceived of sufficient power and wisdom to effect it; or because of some repugnancy in the nature of matter that might render it impossible for the parts of our bodies to be recovered into their first form after they were dissolved into dust and ashes.

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As to the first of these surely it were amazing if any one should imagine the resurrection impossible for want of a sufficient agent, when it is considered that the same almighty power, which produced man originally out of dust, must necessarily be able to restore him when dissolved into it. Surely none can be so weak as to imagine, that he, who knoweth whereof we are made, who formed us from the dust, and turneth us into it again at pleasure ; *whose eyes did see our substance yet being imperfect, when we were made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth ; that he, in whose book were all our members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them :* that he should be at a loss, to restore our dissolved substance into form, and give beauty and order to all the parts of our composition ; to cement the bones, and knit the joints ; to brace the
muscles,

muscles, and inspirit the eye ; to spread abroad the curious embroidery of nerves, and arteries, and veins ; and distend them all with their proper fluids ! This would be to deny to GOD the same power over man, over this composition of clay, (masterly as it is) which common artists claim over their works ; which they can break, or melt down, at will, and raise again into the same ; or, if they please, into much more beautiful and perfect forms.

The goldsmith can dissolve his metals, so, as that they shall not have the least appearance of what they were ; nay, that they shall not have apparently any one distinguishing quality that they had before. He can reduce gold and silver, into a substance as different from gold and silver (to all appearance) as dust and ashes are from flesh and blood : and yet he can recover them again into their first form, with as much ease

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as he dissolved them. And what is more apposite to the present purpose, this dissolution is, for the most part, in order to their refinement. And is not this also the power of the potter over his clay? and is not this power claimed, over and over, by Almighty God; throughout the course of the inspired writings? and would it not be highly monstrous to deny to God the same power over his own creation, which a common artist claims over his materials? It is absurd therefore, utterly absurd, to imagine the resurrection impossible for want of an agent of sufficient power and wisdom to effect it.

And that there is no repugnancy on the part of matter (that is, on the part of that perishable substance of which our bodies are composed) that might hinder the altered and dissolved parts of our frame from being re-restored to their first form, is evident; for as much as it is agreed among
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philosophers, that however bodies may be altered or dissolved, the same matter always remains, and is in its own nature, indifferent to all forms, and susceptible of any ; that the same substance which now is earth and ashes, is in its own nature, equally fitted to become flesh and blood ; or if any of the parts of matter have a natural fitness for one form more than another, on account of their elementary differences, it is certain this fitness still continues after the dissolution of bodies ; since no corruption or dissolution was ever supposed to go farther than the resolution of bodies into their simple or elementary principles. If therefore there was originally any fitness in the constituent parts of human bodies to constitute bodies of such a form, it is evident, that fitness must remain after their dissolution ; and will therefore be so far from being a hindrance to the restitution of their form, that

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it will greatly promote it; and if God needed any assistance, would render the work more easy to him (humanly speaking) than it otherwise would be. It is evident therefore that there is no repugnancy, on the part of matter, that might render the restitution of bodies to their original form, impossible, or in any degree improbable. And therefore the resurrection is not impossible on that account.

But it is objected that some human bodies become the prey of fishes, and other creatures; and that these fishes become the food of other men; also that men sometimes feed upon one another, (as in sieges, and as we are told some wild barbarians do upon their enemies) and that by this means, that which was before a part of one man's body, becomes now a part of another man's; and therefore it is impossible for all men to appear with their intire bodies, at the resurrection; since

since some of them must by this means, of necessity be imperfect.

To this I answer, that unless it could be proved, that some men had fed from their infancy upon human flesh, and drank nothing but blood, (which is impossible) this objection can have no force: for whoever considers how little addition a few chance meals make to the body, and how quickly that little addition passeth away, by perspiration, and the natural discharges, and changes of our frame; will find this objection to be trifling and groundless; and (as most other objections against religion are) the effect of ignorance, and narrow thinking. Nay if it could be proved that some men had fed from their infancy upon human flesh and drank nothing but human blood, the objection would upon the present known principles of natural philosophy be of no force. Inasmuch as it is now agreed, and agreed upon the clearest evidence,

evidence, and best proof, that the solids of all bodies animate, and vegetable, are in their seeds: and that all growth and increase of bodies is only an addition of foreign fluids: which are properly no essential part of the bodies distended and enlarged by them. And therefore if all mankind fed upon one another as much as they possibly could from generation to generation: this would be no objection to their all appearing with their own, entire, original bodies, at the day of judgment.

But it is also objected, and indeed not without reason, that there are some parts of our present bodies subservient to mortal and mean uses: and therefore it is not to be imagined that men should rise with their intire bodies at the last day, since many of their present parts will be useless to that state of perfection and purity.

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To

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To this it may be answered, that the wisdom of GOD might so constitute some parts of our frame, as to answer one use, in this life, and much higher and nobler purposes in another : nor will it follow, that the body is not the same, though the fashion of some of its parts should be very different at the last, from what we behold them at present. An acorn is a substance seemingly of a very different nature from an oak ; and yet it is agreed among naturalists, that this noble vegetable, the pride of the forest, is no more than an acorn unfolded and displayed in all its glory and grandeur. A caterpillar hath a vast number of feet to convey it from place to place, in that mean, crawling condition, to which it is condemned for a season : it hath also a great number of hideous hairs, and other deformities ; all which intirely disappear when it changeth into a fly : and yet nobody doubts but the

the body of this creature is the same in both states.

And thus having shewn you that the resurrection of the body is in no wise impossible ; I proceed in the next place to shew that it is from the nature and reason of things highly credible and reasonable. Can any thing be more rational than to believe that GOD hath appointed to beings of different orders and perfections, different ends of existence, proportioned to their excellence ? Can it be believed then with any pretence of probability, that GOD should conclude reasonable creatures under the same terms of existence, with brutes ; without any regard to the superior excellence of their nature ?

That this world was made for man, (as the scriptures assure us it was) is out of all dispute : *Moses* tells us that GOD gave man dominion over the other creatures : and

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experience sheweth us that he is in possession of that dominion to this day: that he is actually lord of this nether world. Now to behold a world formed for one species of beings, millions of creatures submitted to their dominion, and made for their use, and at the same time to suppose those beings of no more worth or consequence than the creatures made for their conveniency, is one of the wildest and most extravagant suppositions that ever entered into the human head. Is this any way consistent with any, and much less with infinite wisdom? Should we behold a vast palace, erected at the expence of infinite toil and treasure, fitted out with all imaginable magnificence, and furnished with an infinity of all the conveniencies, necessaries, and ornaments of life, with servants of all kinds and capacities, to attend and obey as occasion should require; and should we be told at the same time, that
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the favourite for whom this palace was erected, was in truth of no more value or estimation in the eyes of his prince (who built it) than the meanest tile that covered it, or utensil that adorned it; think as we will of the magnificence of the founder, we could not think highly of his wisdom: we could not but think meanly of his goodness and affection to his favourite. But should we upon a further inquiry, become fully informed of the true character of this monarch, and find him to be infinitely the best and the wisest of all others; what could then be more contemptible or detestable to us, than the opinions and suggestions of those who supposed the favourite and the furniture to be of the same value in his esteem.

And thus having shewn you that the resurrection is not only possible, but highly credible and rational also, I proceed in the last place, to shew,

that both our own nature, and the moral attributes of GOD, do necessarily require it.

If GOD be good, and just, and powerful, there cannot be a clearer consequence ; than that he must reward the good, and punish the wicked, in such a manner, as best becomes a being of infinite wisdom, and goodness, that governs the world : that is, in such a manner, as will, in the end, most effectually contribute to the good of the whole. Now it is evidently most for the good of the whole reasonable, and intelligent world, that virtue, should at some time or other, be eminently, and universally rewarded, and vice signally, and universally punished. For since vice naturally and necessarily tends to make all reasonable beings miserable ; and virtue to make them happy ; and since all thinking beings have their own happiness at heart, and dread their own misery ; there is no imaginable way of making all such
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beings as have not yet been given up to vice, universally, and effectually virtuous, that is, universally and effectually happy ; but by exhibiting vice, at some time or other, completely and infinitely punished ; and virtue completely and infinitely rewarded.

Now since virtue cannot be so exhibited in this state of things ; in a world, where it is, too often, not only despised, but distressed : in a world, where true happiness is not to be attained : in a world, where man, from the very prerogative of his reason, anticipating his misfortunes, and in perpetual conflict with his passions, is perhaps the most miserable being below ! it is a necessary consequence from the power, and wisdom, and goodness of GOD ; that good men must have another life, and another state allotted them after this.

Besides this ; the honour of GOD's laws, and authority of his govern-

ment, do necessarily require another state of things after this : for the same reason, which teacheth us, that honour should be paid to the laws of GOD, must also teach us, that the honour of those laws should be vindicated, after it hath been insulted by sin. And the only way this can be done, is either by the repentance and reformation of the transgressor, or by his punishment and destruction. So that GOD is necessarily obliged, in vindication of the honour of his laws, and government, to punish those, who presumptuously and impenitently disobey, and transgress his commandments. And this, his justice obligeth him to do, in proportion to their guilt: and since this is not done, and indeed is impossible to be done in this world, therefore it necessarily followeth that it must be done in another.

Now that vice is not, cannot be adequately punished in this world, is evident.

Will

Will any man say, that a robber, or any other profligate wretch, who hath committed many murders, can atone for them all with one life? or a tyrant, that hath wasted provinces, and sacrificed whole nations to his ambition and revenge, can make ample reparation for all the evil and outrage he hath brought into the world, by the sacrifice of his single carcass? In one word, can it be imagined that any man whatsoever, who hath led a life of lewdness, of fraud, of cruelty, of oppression, of vice and villainy of any kind; can suffer any thing in this world, equal to the guilt of all the endless evils he hath committed; together with his continued insults upon the goodness and authority of GOD? And when these men live in a constant course of outward prosperity, (as they are sometimes seen to do) if there be no future retribution, it is evident they feel no other punishment of their sin, than the stings of

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of conscience, and the temporal inconveniencies of it : and that these are inferior to the pleasure of their wickedness, is plain ; because otherwise, they would be able to restrain them from it. Besides, it is notorious, that wicked men by a constant and long practice of evil, sin away all sense of conscience : that faculty of the soul, being like some tender parts of the body ; which at first, are so nicely sensible, that they cannot bear the least violent impression ; but after long and repeated application, become altogether callous, and insensible. Since therefore the wicked cannot suffer the adequate rewards of their guilt in this world, the justice of God requires that they should receive them in another.

Now man being properly a compound being, made up of body and spirit ; and the justice and goodness of God requiring a future retribution for this being ; it followeth of necessity,

necessity, that there must be a resurrection : that is, a reunion of the same soul to the same body. For otherwise, there could be no retribution to that being. I say, otherwise, man (properly speaking) that is, that human being, which is made up of body and soul, could neither be rewarded or punished. For, neither the soul, nor the body separate, is man : but both united. And since reason assures us that one part of this being is immortal, and revelation assures us that the rewards and punishments of a future state shall be eternal ; it followeth of necessity, that our bodies must be *changed* : that is, as St. Paul expresseth it, *this mortal body must put on immortality* : in order to be accommodated to the nature of the soul ; in a state of never ceasing existence.

O ! my brethren, it is impossible that the whole view and compass of God's bringing a set of rational beings

ings into the world, and fitting up a creation for our dominion and use, should be concluded, in perpetuating a short lived succession, of such a disorderly and irregular race, as the main of mankind now most undoubtedly are : a race of beings, created reasonable, and for that reason, accountable for their actions ; and yet, for the most part, subsisting here, in an open violation of all the rules of a reasonable conduct ! to create a race of reasonable beings, for no other end, than to pass sixty or seventy years, in a world of vice, and vanity ; in a vale of vexation, and misery ! and either in an unwearied pursuit of vice, or a painful, unrewarded practice of virtue ! to pass one stage of life, in ignorant and insignificant infancy ! another, in the giddiness, and vice and vanity of youth ! A third, In all the cares and eager pursuits of manhood ; the gratifications of vain ambition, and grasplings

graspings after momentary grandeur! or at best, in anxious and endless provisions for a family! And lastly, to pass the closing scene of life in the avarice, insignificance, and the endless ailments and infirmities of old age: and then die, and be nothing but dust and ashes! then die, and be nothing but dust! after we have toiled out a wretched unmeaning life, at least unmeaning to any higher, or nobler purposes, than to leave a short lived fleeting family behind us; made for no other end, than to run the same round of vexation, and vice, and vanity, that their parents did before them! and is all this the work of infinite wisdom, and goodness? he that hath said, that there is no God, is most certainly a fool: and all the works of infinite wisdom and goodness that surround him proclaim and demonstrate him to be so; but he that hath said (even in his heart) there is such a god as this, is incomparably

parably a greater fool. A GOD of infinite wisdom, who created a world for no other end, than perpetuating a succession, of perishing, vain, wretched, miserable mortals ; full of fears without foundation, and hopes without fruition : endlessly wicked without punishment ; and anxiously virtuous without reward ! Can GOD be infinitely wise, and yet create a world, for ends, which common sense clearly sees to be silly, and insignificant ?

This cannot be : a world of infinite wisdom, must be made for ends, worthy of infinite wisdom. The eternal and immutable attributes of GOD, demand an open, and a final vindication of the honour and authority of his laws, and the wisdom of his works. And therefore it is absolutely necessary : it is necessary as the justice, and power, and wisdom of GOD : that there should be a future state of existence of the same persons : and such a distribution of re-
wards

wards and punishments, as will compensate for the present disorder and inequality ; a new state of existence ! and another establishment of things : in which, the whole scheme of the divine providence, which (to those who contemplate only one part of it) seems now so irregular and confused ; shall appear in its full comprehension, consummate, and uniform ; and every way worthy the justice, and wisdom, and goodness of God.

And thus I have gone through the several heads, which I proposed to treat of, in the beginning of this discourse : wherein I shewed you, first, that the resurrection was possible, both from the same power that produced us originally out of nothing. From the nature of matter, and from the example of artists, who can reduce their materials into new, and in appearance perfectly different substances : and yet recover them again, into their first form.

Secondly,

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Secondly I shewed you, that it is, from the nature, and reason of things, highly credible, and rational.

And thirdly, I shewed you, that both our own nature, and the divine justice, and goodness, did necessarily require it. Our own nature, in order to attain the true ends of it; and the justice and goodness of God, in order to the good of the whole rational creation: in order to vindicate the honour of his laws, and the wisdom of his works.

But still, some will object to the resurrection; because they cannot conceive how these vile earthly bodies can undergo so amazing a change, as the scriptures assure us they shall, from corruptible to incorruptible, and from gross to glorious.

To these I answer, that if they must never believe any thing, until they are thoroughly informed of the nature and manner of it, they may doubt and deny every thing in nature:

ture : because they cannot account for any one of its least and lowest productions : they do not so much as understand the formation of a blade of grass, or a grain of sand. Indeed every grain of sand, we see, every blade of grass we tread upon, is as full of mystery as the resurrection. What would these men think of an idiot that should deny the possibility of making a watch or a clock, because he had no notion how a rude mass of coarse, and rough ore or mine could be melted and refined into masses of smooth, and shining, and solid metals : and some of the meanest of those metals endowed with such amazing powers as to be able to point out the several measures, and moments of time ; nay more, the revolutions and irregularities of the planets, and other celestial bodies ? And yet, if they have the least modesty, they must own that there is an infinitely greater

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distance

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distance between their abilities, and the abilities of Almighty God, than there is, betwixt the greatest artist upon earth, and the greatest ideot.

Will these men tell us, how a vile clod of earth is converted into the finest flowers, and most delicious fruits in the world; or how so gross and dark a substance as common coal, is convertible into so bright and glorious a body, as we behold it when inflamed? And yet our imagination is at a loss, how to wish for a greater, and more glorious change at the last day, in proportion to our present perfection, than we behold in all these instances.

But the truth is, infidelity is the joint effect of our arrogance, and ignorance! in reality we know little relating to this world, and our own true character, and condition in it, beyond the revealed will of God. The will of God revealed in the inspired writings of his prophets, and
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apostles ; and in the wisdom of his works. And yet such is our vanity, and arrogance, we pronounce upon every thing : and would be thought ignorant of nothing. The true way of judging of the wisdom, and goodness of G O D, is by looking with humble attention, into his will, and works. One sure way of judging what G O D may do in another world, is to see what he hath done in this world. If we would look into the ways and works of G O D here below, we should soon find, that those things are done in the world, every day, which we are so apt to imagine impossible even to G O D, at the last. Should a curious observer of nature, shew an infidel, unacquainted with the wonders of this nether world, a loathsome maggot, or crawling caterpillar, and then ask him whether he thought it possible, that this vile reptile should be converted into one of the most beautiful creatures that mortal eyes

ever beheld; fitted out in the most exact symmetry; adorned with all imaginable embellishments of gilding, and painting! active, and volatile; enabled to soar up to heaven, and range all the beauties of the creation, himself among the greatest? I say, should a curious observer of nature put this question to a giddy, ignorant libertine, there is no question, but this proud unbeliever, would, in the fulness of infidel insolence, laugh him to scorn; and point at him, for a madman, a credulous sot, and a fit instrument of priestcraft and delusion. And yet, how must this miscreant blush, to find all this insolence, and incredulity, the effect of wretched, and stupid ignorance! to find, that it is to such vile worms as these, we owe the active bee, and gaudy butterfly, whose colouring is as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold! In one word, that it is

to this wonderful transformation, we owe all that beautiful, and amazing variety, that is to be seen among the insect kind; which, altho' vile and loathsome before their change, yet after it, are without question in some circumstances of their outward form the most curious, and exquisite part of the creation! exquisite to such a degree, that the embellishment of the least part, and portion of them; of one wing, of one joint, infinitely exceeds not only the skill, but even the comprehension and imagination of all the artists that have ever lived from the foundation of the world.

One circumstance preceeding this change, is well worth our most serious attention. And that is, that when they have fulfilled the period of their caterpillar state, they shut themselves up into a cocoon, or case of their own texture; as it were into a coffin: and there *wait*, like *Job**,

* Job xiv. 14.

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all the days of their appointed time ;
(in a state of seeming insensibility and
death) *till their change come.* And
then, they break out at once, under
new forms, with new and amazing
abilities, powers and beauties.

If then G O D so cloath the worms
of the earth, the lowest and least dig-
nified of his works, *how much more*
shall he cloath you, O ye of little
faith ! If a vile worm gain so
much glory, and beauty, and activity
by his change ; that from a loath-
some reptile he becomes a lovely vo-
latile ; from crawling slow upon the
earth, and being a nuisance to it, he
shall soar up to heaven, and range
free and unconfined ! how exceed-
ing must the glory of good men be at
the last day ! how transcendent their
beauty ! how amazing and excellent
their powers, past all imagination or
expression ! *when this mortal shall*
put on immortality ! and this corrup-
tible shall have put on incorruption !
when

when that which was *sown in weakness* (subject to labour and infirmity, to sickness and decay) *shall be raised in power* : (active, and strong, without waste, or weariness or pain) *was sown in dishonour*, went to the grave, with mean, ungraceful, dishonourable parts) *shall be raised in glory* (refulgent in celestial splendor, and dazzling as the sun) *was sown a natural body* (a gross, material, mortal carcase) *shall be raised a spiritual body* : (refined into the vigour and activity of thought, and advanced to the perfection of angels, and glorified spirits) and all this in an instant.

And here too, GOD hath not left himself without witness : forasmuch as some of those amazing changes, which I told you were wrought among the insect kinds, are confessedly exhibited to our eyes, as the work of a moment ; as the most curious naturalists do expressly assure us : as if GOD, by the repeated examples of

so many glorious changes in an instant, had determined to leave the infidel every way inexcusable and shew him, to his utter confusion, with what ease our blessed Saviour shall at the last day change *our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed—* changed, by the power, and into the similitude of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To whom, with the father and the holy spirit, be all honour, and power, and praise, both now, and for evermore.

S E R-

S E R M O N V I I I .

The Example of Almighty G O D
recommended to us in the Point
of Forgiveness.

St. *Luke*, Chap. vi. Ver. 36.

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your
Father also is merciful.*

TH E S E words are part of a
sermon which our blessed Sa-
viour Jesus Christ preached to his
disciples, and to a great multitude
of people *out of all Judea and Je-
rusalem, and from the sea coasts of
Tyre and Sidon.*

In this sermon, after he hath
delivered many noble and exalted
precepts concerning acts of kind-
ness, and goodness, and forgiveness, he

crowns all, by commanding us, to imitate the example of GOD : to be merciful, as our father (which is in heaven) *is merciful.*

Our blessed Saviour well knew, how forcibly mankind are swayed, and influenced by example : he likewise knew, that the examples of the best men in this world, were, very often deceitful, and dangerous. And therefore he proposeth Almighty GOD to our imitation : as being the only perfect pattern. The goodness of the best men, in this world, is but mixed, and imperfect : and therefore their example may be of dangerous imitation : because oftentimes, it is not easy to distinguish betwixt the excellencies, and the errors of men, especially those, of whom, we have conceived high notions, with regard to the goodness of their intentions, and the perfection of their practice. GOD frequently suffereth the wisest of men to fall into errors, and

and the best into sin, either to humble their vanity, that they might *know themselves to be but men*, or to make them more indulgent to the ignorance and weakness of their fellow-creatures; or for whatever other good reasons he of his infinite wisdom thinks fit. And if we were implicitly to imitate the best and most perfect even of those examples, either of wisdom or piety proposed to us in the holy scriptures, we might sometimes be drawn into the greatest errors and misdemeanours. This our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus well knew, and therefore he commandeth us to follow the example of GOD, because there are no false lights in his goodness, nor any alloy in his excellence. And we may be assured that whilst we are guided by that great *light that enlighthneth the whole world*. Whilst we follow the example of the great and glorious majesty of heaven and earth, we shall never be led into any
danger

danger or error. Hence it is that our blessed Saviour in his sermon upon the mount biddeth us to *be perfect, even as our father which is in heaven is perfect.* And in the words of my text to *be merciful, as our father also is merciful.*

When he commandeth us to be perfect as our father which is in heaven is perfect, he commandeth us to imitate all the moral perfections of GOD, his truth, his justice, his purity, his abhorrence of fraud and falshood, and hypocrisy; and in the words of my text, he commandeth us more particularly to imitate that peculiar and more endearing attribute of the almighty whereby he delighteth to be distinguished amongst the sons of men, *be ye merciful, as your father also is merciful.*

It is evident that by the mercy of GOD is here meant his benignity, and indulgence to mankind, in pardoning our offences and relieving our wants :

wants : this will clearly appear by reading this with chapter of St. *Luke's* gospel, whereof my text is a part. And the design of this discourse is to recommend the example of GOD to you in both these instances.

First, that we forgive our brethren, as our heavenly father forgiveth us.

And secondly, that we relieve the wants and necessities of our fellow-creatures as our great creator relieveth and supplieth ours.

First then we are to forgive our brethren, as our heavenly father forgiveth us.

Let us inquire therefore into the nature and number of those offences wherewith we daily provoke the wrath of GOD against us.

And first, the sins we commit against GOD, are of a vastly more heinous, and aggravated nature, than any we can possibly commit against one another. They are a complication

tion of rebellion, and ingratitude, against the highest power, and the greatest goodness. They are the offences of vile, and worthless vassals, against their creator, and their king; the great majesty of heaven and earth! to whom they owe their lives, their fortunes, their being, and all the blessings that attend it: whereas the crimes we commit against one another, are but offences against our fellow-servants, and cannot possibly bear any the least proportion to the guilt of those crimes we commit against God; our great lord and master.

Moreover, as the crimes we commit against God, are infinitely more heinous; so are they likewise vastly more in number. The proportion which our blessed Saviour hath laid down in the gospel, is; that the sins we commit against God, are to one another, in their greatness, as a talent to a penny, (that is, as six thousand

to

to one, for the talent contained six thousand of the *Roman denarii*, or pence) and in their number, as ten thousand talents to an hundred pence.

Not that this is the exact proportion. For indeed, the sins we commit against G O D, are infinitely greater: are greater beyond all proportion; nevertheless this sufficiently answered our blessed Saviour's design, in this place; which was, to shew, that the offences we commit against G O D, are infinitely greater, and vastly more in number, than any we can possibly commit against one another. As you may read at the xviiiith chapter of St. *Matthew's* gospel, in the parable of the great king taking an account of his servants; one of whom ought him ten thousand talents: but upon his humble submission, his lord forgave him all.

Ver. 28. *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which ought him an hundred pence:*

pence : and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest.

29. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him ; saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30. And he would not : but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32. Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

33. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35. So

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35. *So likewise (saith our blessed Saviour) shall my heavenly father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

Again the indulgence of GOD in the forgiveness of sins, is very emphatically set forth, in the xvth chapter of the gospel according to St. *Luke*, in the parable of the prodigal son. In this, we see, how ready Almighty GOD is to pardon the highest offences; even that of intirely throwing off our obedience to his laws; upon the first return of sincere repentance.

The prodigal had left his father's house; and wasted away *his portion in riotous living*; insomuch that he was reduced at length to feed upon husks with swine: nevertheless, as soon as he came to himself, and returned to his father; the indulgent father *ran to meet him; and fell upon his neck, and kissed him.* In like
P manner,

manner, we should forgive the greatest offences of our fellow-creatures, upon the first shew of repentance; even as the father hasted to meet his son, when he was yet afar off; took him to his arms, and received him again into his house.

But here it will be necessary to observe, that we are in one instance, as it were to go beyond the example of GOD, in the point of forgiveness: for we are to pardon the offences committed against us, even without reparation, or repentance: which GOD nowhere declareth that he will. I am sensible that many learned men are of another opinion, and think we are not bound to forgive but upon the offender's repentance: and indeed they are well warranted in thinking so: both from the Lord's prayer, and those express precepts of our blessed Saviour in the xviith chapter of *St. Luke*, *if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: and if he repent, forgive*

forgive him : and if he trespass against thee seven Times in a day ; and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.

Here we find, that repentance is an expresse condition of pardon : and it is of the last consequence to every offender to remember that it is so : but I beg leave to add, that it will better become the humility of the offended, and his consciousness of his own numerous infirmities, and offences ; not rigidly to insist upon the example of GOD in this point, because GOD's forgiveness is in a judicial way, and must therefore be done in such a manner, as may best maintain the sanctions of his laws ; and either prevent, or vindicate the violation of them. Whereas the ends of the divine laws would be utterly defeated, if those who carefully observed them, went unrewarded ; and those who impenitently transgressed them went unpunished : but our for-

giveness is not in a judicial way, being only a mutual condonation of the errors and infirmities, and even the malignity of our natures; for the better preservation of peace, and love, and good-will among mankind. Whereas the father we see did not forgive the prodigal; that is, GOD did not forgive the offender; till he returned to him, that is, till he repented and forsook his wicked courses.

Thirdly, GOD for the promotion of peace and love, and good will among mankind; hath made the pardon of the transgressions committed against us, by our brethren, the expresse condition of our own forgiveness for those sins we commit against our heavenly father, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*, and therefore since there doth not a day pass over our heads, wherein, we have not need to implore pardon of Almighty

mighty GOD, for the repeated transgressions of his laws; we should hence learn, after his example, to forgive the obstinate, and repeated injuries of our fellow-creatures, *even unto seventy times seven.* And what one temptation lieth in our way to transgress this command but the pleasure of revenge? and surely no thinking man can be so hardy as to oppose the pleasure of revenge, which is only so to a perverse heart; and is, at best, but for a moment, to the pains of hell, which must follow from disobedience to this command: and must be for ever and ever. Certainly they must have high notions of the sweets of revenge, that will hazard eternal pain to attain them.

But here it may be asked how this doctrine of remitting injuries, and forgiving offences, is consistent, with the duty we owe the public, in bringing offenders to justice? or the duty we often owe to ourselves, and

our families, in seeking reparation of damages, and restitution of wrongs?

To this I answer, first, that no wish is more natural to the human heart, or more agreeable to the human reason, than the desire of being recovered into the same state of ease and enjoyment, of which either the open violence, or secret villanies of others have deprived us; and therefore, all honest and equitable measures for attaining these ends, are perfectly justified in the sight of God and man, and are in no sort opposed to the mercy recommended from the text. The mercy commanded in the gospel, is principally enjoined, in opposition to revenge. A principle of a very different nature, from the desire of reparation. For revenge, strictly speaking is a desire of inflicting evil upon others, in return for evils either inflicted, or intended by them: it is a passion that taketh pleasure in the hurt and torment of others.

others. And this is, that which the gospel of GOD forbiddeth; as having something in it utterly abhorrent from right reason. To injure another, without prospect of any real advantage or benefit to ourselves, is, in the eye of reason, monstrous, and unnatural. And to make the misery of others matter of delight and complacence, is inhuman and devilish: and this is that revenge which the holy gospel forbiddeth in every command of mercy and forgiveness. Besides this, there are some injuries which are the manifest effects of folly, and ignorance, without any consequence worth our regard. And these, an honest and a good man should remit, from the dignity of his nature: as well as from the example of Almighty GOD; who doth so in infinite instances! that GOD, whom the scriptures describe to us in that most amiable and exalted character,

that he is not extreme to mark what is done amiss.

But secondly, as the mercy enjoined in the Text, is no way opposed to the duty of recovering a right that is wrested from us; so neither is it any way opposed to the duty of bringing offenders to justice: and inflicting condign punishment upon them. To prosecute guilt, to detect and expose fraud, to unmask hypocrisy; to repress and chastise vice, and villany of every kind; are duties we owe to GOD and to the public: private and personal injuries every man may remit; and every good man will remit, when reason and religion require he should. But injuries of a public nature, every man is bound to prosecute, as far as in him lieth; and the duty of his station requireth. And every good man must, and will prosecute them. But then he must be careful to do it, after

after the example of Almighty GOD: *who delighteth not in the death of a sinner: but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* Like him, therefore, we should never prosecute, or punish an offence; but from the prospect of some good end to be attained by it. Such as the reparation of injuries; or terror of guilt: that is, where it is beneficent to punish; and would be injurious to forgive without punishing. And this is the case of all unrepented injuries whatsoever: we may pardon, and yet punish. And at the same time that we do pardon the offence, we are oftentimes bound in conscience to discountenance the offender, to the utmost of our power. And this we are bound to do in all cases where the offender continues in any habit of known guilt, or open violation and neglect of duty. Hence that expression of St. Paul, *with such a one,*

to one, no not to eat ; hence also it is made one Character of a good man by the psalmist, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned. And in another place, GOD himself is thus introduced rebuking a sinner, why dost thou preach my Laws and takest my covenant in thy mouth, whereas thou batest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee ?

In the last place, we should forgive the offences committed against us, after the example of Almighty GOD ; because, in so doing, we do in some measure approach the majesty and grandeur of the divine nature. And recover some part of that likeness of the deity in which we were created : for there is something so exalted, and noble, in being able to remit the most daring provocations, and the most aggravated injuries ; that we could not conceive so highly even of GOD himself, as we do ;

do; if mercy, and forgiveness, did not make up so great, and so glorious a part of his character.

Forgiveness is in life the mark of a great soul. As it is in empire the badge of power and prerogative! for as every little magistrate can punish an offence, (and the least is appointed to punish the greatest) when nothing less than sovereignty and majesty can forgive it; so likewise every low, and little spirit can reach the sense of an injury; and relish the sweets of a revenge; whereas none but the great and elevated genius is above it, is able to look down upon it at once with pardon and with pity: in this also, approaching, in some measure, to the grandeur of that mighty being, whose greatness is best estimated by his goodness: *for as his majesty is, so is his mercy.* Ecclus. ii. 18.

And thus I have done with the first part of this discourse, wherein
I have

I have endeavoured to recommend the example of GOD to you in the point of forgiveness: namely, that we should forgive our brethren, as our heavenly father forgiveth us.

S E R -

S E R M O N IX.

The Example of Almighty G O D
recommended to us in Point of
Charity and Relief to the Necessi-
tous and Distressed.

St. *Luke*; Chap. vi. Ver. 36.

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your
Father also is merciful.*

IN a former discourse upon these words, I proposed to recommend the example of G O D to your imitation in two instances, namely, in the point of forgiveness, and the point of charity. That we forgive our brethren as our *heavenly Father forgiveth us*; and that we relieve the wants and necessities of our fellow-creatures

creatures as our great creator relieveth and supplieth ours.

The first of these heads I have already considered.

I come now, in the second place, to recommend the example of GOD to you in the case of charity. To wit, that we should relieve and supply the necessities of our fellow-creatures, as our great creator relieveth and supplieth ours.

First then, the mercy of GOD is boundless and universal: it is *over all his works!* his bounty is not limited, nor restrained by any private regards. With him, there is no acceptance of persons: nay, so far is his goodness unrestrained, that even sin itself is not a sufficient bar against it. For *he sendeth his rain upon the good and upon the evil, and maketh his sun to rise upon the just and upon the unjust:* they all share of many great and valuable blessings in common: it being the gracious pleasure, and wise appointment

pointment of the divine goodness; that the wicked should rather fare the better for the good; than that the good should fare the worse for the wicked. Him therefore we should imitate, and not confine our charity, to any one relation, or sect, or society of men. *As we have opportunity,* (saith the apostle, with Gal. 10th:) *let us do good unto all men.* It is true he addeth; *especially to them who are of the household of faith.* Inasmuch as our abilities are restrained, therefore we should take care to exert them, upon the most deserving objects: for even GOD himself, how unlimited soever his mercy is; hath nevertheless a peculiar reserve of happiness for the good. However, because we are not always able to distinguish betwixt those that are deserving objects of our charity, and those that are not; we should always take care to be on the sure side of mercy: it being safer, and better,

ter, to relieve some few, that are not worthy; than to neglect, or overlook any one that is. After the example of Almighty God, let the wicked fare the better for the good; rather than let the good fare the worse for the wicked.

But here, there is one caution to be laid down; which is of the last consequence, to be carefully attended to: and that is, that the vagrant beggar is an eternal exception, to all the precepts, and dictates of christian charity. The race of vagrant beggars, are the vilest race, that ever cursed the earth. Every penny given to the vagrant beggar, is so much taken away from honest industry, and christian charity: taken away from christian charity, and given away to idleness, and lewdness; to vice, and villany; to abominations and corruptions of every kind! in one word, it is so much of our substance withheld from God, and dedicated

dedicated to the devil. Vagrant beggars are the reproach, and ruin of every country under heaven, where they are endured ! and although they are less the reproach, of this country, than perhaps of any other region under heaven ; yet is not this country clear, of at least equal reproach, on another, not less criminal account. I mean that encouragement given to idleness, of some kind or other ; or rather to idleness, and vice of every kind ; too sadly seen in their dreadful effects. I mean those shameful, shocking, and frequent examples of lewdness, drunkenness, and profaneness, blasphemous and hellish profaneness ! that defile, and curse your streets. Together with those frequent, and shocking robberies, which infest this * country, in almost every quarter of it : and more particularly, in the fur-

* Preached in *London* in 1754.

rounds of this city. Robberies, detestable and dreadful beyond the examples of former ages. The ruffians of these times, begin, where their predecessors in violence rarely ended: and never but from necessity. They begin with murders. Their predecessors shewed something, even in their villanies, which seemed to have a cast of old *English* generosity. They robbed the wealthy: and sometimes they relieved the necessitous with the spoils of the rich. But these wretches have degenerated even beneath, far beneath the vices of their predecessors. They rob the poorest of the poor: and have not only renounced all appearance of *English* generosity, but they have even adopted *French* and foreign cruelty.

My brethren, you cannot I think, be ignorant, that many, I believe most of these, are laid to the charge, either of the natives of this city, or persons educated in it. Who from
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the licences of idle hours, and amusements, in which they have been long indulged ; have contracted such evil habits, as cannot easily be corrected : and created such craving, and evil appetites, as cannot easily be gratified, by honest industry : even if it were exerted, to that purpose : which cannot reasonably be expected, after a long indulgence, in inveterate habits of idleness.

What's to be done in this case ? the direction is obvious : and right and steady resolutions would make it practicable. Bring back your apprentices, your children, your servants, to the regular hours, discipline, and industry of your ancestors. Indulge them not in the vain, and idle amusements, that surround you : and above all, set them righteous, honest, and christian examples in all these points : and in every praise, and practice of true piety, and virtue. And whilst this is doing, en-

courage the rising race of poor amongst you ; and use your best endeavours to see them educated, and exercised, in the best, most social, and most christian principles, and habits. And in this also, set the example of GOD before you, in another character of his goodness ; which is this.

GOD is never weary of well doing. The most aggravated ingratitude, and obstinate disobedience doth not turn away his bounty, even from those that know not, nay even from those that doubt and deny whence they have it. Alas if GOD dealt with us after our deservings, and if ignorance, insensibility, or even ingratitude were a sufficient bar with him for withholding his blessings from us, what would become even of the very best men upon earth ? after his example therefore, let *us not render evil for evil, but contrarywise blessing.* Let *us not be weary of well-doing.* It

is true my brethren, demands of this kind of charity, return annually upon you: and demands of the like nature, return in some shape or other, daily. Yet must ye not be weary of well doing: but rather bless GOD for the occasions afforded you, and doubly bless him, for the abilities bestowed upon you, to do good. Alas, these poor orphans, and outcasts before you, know not their obligations; know not their benefactors: and perhaps if they have any parents, they may be as insensible, and ungrateful, for the blessings you bestow upon their issue, as those on whom they are bestowed are ignorant. Let not this however give the least check to your charity: but imitate the unwearied benignity of Almighty GOD that in so doing, *ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven.* Let it not be said, that wicked men are more obstinately and perversely malignant;
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than good men are constantly and steadily beneficent. In a word, after the example of the Almighty, let us never suffer any ignorance, insensibility, or even ingratitude or unworthiness to get the better of our goodness.

Thirdly, GOD bestoweth his blessings seasonably. *Thou openest thine hand, (saith the psalmist) and fillest all things living with plenteousness. The eyes of all wait upon thee O Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season.*

How glorious an idea of the divinity is this! he but openeth his hand, and an infinity of blessings flow from it: he but openeth his hand, and the whole creation is at once abundantly supplied, relieved and rejoiced. And to crown all, he doth this, at the very time when that relief is most demanded, and best fitted to effect its ends. *Thou givest them their meat in due season.*

My

My brethren the secret and less discernable measures of the divine goodness, in the dispensations of his providence, are best estimated, by those laws of beneficence, openly established in the conduct and government of the world. God is bestowing blessings of one kind or other, upon us, every moment: and no doubt if we could discern them as well, but we should find many of them, as regular, as the growth of fruits, and the increase of creatures necessary to our use. The great blessings we behold, are all seasonable!

How steady are the returns of day and night (saith a heathen moralist) and how constant the revolutions of the seasons? if these blessings were not certain, if they could not be depended upon; if we received them at unexpected intervals, and the time of their arrival were unknown; what infinite anxiety would distract, and

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what

what dreadful disappointment would undo the world.

In like manner, let us also emulate this circumstance of the divine bounty ; and the little good we have ability and opportunity of doing in the world ; let us do it, in the best season, and in the best manner we can. Not slowly, or unseasonably ; *not grudgingly, or of necessity ; for God loveth a chearful giver* (saith the apostle, ii Cor. chap. 9, ver. 7.) we see, that even the blessings of the Almighty, how great and glorious soever in themselves, are yet exceedingly sweetened, and heightened by the time and the manner of conferring them. How much more then must it be so, in the mutual, and social offices of humanity ; where the circumstances of the kindness, very frequently, make the best and most distinguished parts of its character. The charity is then truly christian, and complete ; when the dignity

dignity of that divine office is accompanied, with all the charms, of humanity, good-nature, and seasonable dispatch.

And surely my brethren, no nation was ever so loudly called upon for charities of any kind, as you are at this time, for charities of this kind. It is shocking to speak it; and dreadful even to think it: but the truth is too notorious; the lowest ranks of men amongst you, are perhaps the most corrupt, and degenerate race, of brutal mortals in the shape of men, that ever infested the earth. Their reformation is desperate. They are too abandoned to be amended. How will you do then? what can you do? to check this torrent, this flood of iniquity, that is pouring in upon you? There is no imaginable method of effecting this, but by stopping it at its source. Exert your utmost care, your most christian industry, to render the present rising race of poor among you, as exemplary in
piety,

piety, and virtue, as those, who are already grown up, are profligate, in impiety, and vice. As those wretches are cut off by the society for their crimes; let these poor children before you, and their associates in your city charities, supply their places. As I doubt not they will, to its great advantage: by the blessing of GOD upon your christian endeavours. Let these blessings fill up the place of those pests. As those noxious and poisonous weeds are rooted out, let these healthful, and salutary shoots, be carefully planted, and cultivated in their stead. And this you will do; this my brethren ye must do: (if ye wish, as I am sure ye do) to save your country from ruin; and your city from sinking. I am verily persuaded, that you are in a great measure to this city, what the apostles of Jesus Christ, and their successors the teachers of his gospel, are to the world: *the salt of the earth.*

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The seat of virtue here, is as the philosophers have placed it, in their systems, in the middle state: the extremes above and below you, are (God knows) abundantly corrupt. And I verily believe, that the virtue, and piety predominant in the middle state of citizens, hath, like the seasoning of *salt*, preserved the body from total corruption. If *Sodom* had taken the same care, of the piety, and morals, of their youth, which you do, of those amongst you, that need it most; if the mighty works of public charity, and piety which have been done in thee, had been done in *Sodom*, *it would have remained to this day.*—And if they had not been done in thee, *except the lord of hosts had left unto us this small remnant*, of true piety, and virtue, (which large as it is, is yet small in comparison of the whole) you might truly say to yourselves with the prophet *we should have been as Sodom,*
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and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Fourthly and lastly, GOD bestoweth his blessings upon us, without any by end: without any prospect of advantage or reward: he giveth intirely for the sake of giving, and doing good. And what nobler pattern can we propose to our imitation, than this disinterested bounty of the Almighty?

And herein is the goodness of GOD wonderfully manifested to us; that he hath not only made it our duty, but our interest also, to make as many men happy as we can. Nay it is not only our temporal, but also our eternal interest. For besides the delight that attendeth it here; he hath assured us, that everlasting happiness will be the reward of it in heaven. As to the delight that attendeth it here; it is evident, that if we have any remains of goodness, the happiness we create to others, must

must necessarily add to our own. Our great Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath taught us, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. A lesson, truly worthy of God! a lesson which nothing but the fulness of the divinity dwelling in him, could dictate. The felicity of the divine nature is inseparable from beneficence, or to speak more properly, must as far as we can judge principally arise from it. God giveth merely from the delight of doing good: he giveth without any possibility of any advantage he can receive from us, in return; unless, in reflecting upon that felicity, and rejoicing in it, which our gratitude to him must create in our own breasts: this is so evident; that if we could conceive, how any thing could be an addition to the essential beatitude of the Almighty; it would be, the communication of his blessings, to that immense number of beings, whom he created, to share

share of his felicities: as if God could not be infinitely happy; unless that happiness were infinitely diffused: and altho' our abilities cannot extend like those of Almighty God, to the whole compass of the creation; yet our love, our good will, should be universal, and unlimited. For charity consisteth not, so much, in acts of kindness; as in a constant inclination to do all the good we can. And this disposition will enable us, to share in all the happiness, we either cause, or conceive others to enjoy.

But to be more particular, how happy a reflection is it, to have relieved the miserable; to have bestowed the blessings of good education, and virtuous principles? to rescue naked and helpless innocence, from the slavery of sin, and ignorance, and the temptations of want. To clothe the widow, to relieve the fatherless; to redeem the poor, and the

the oppressed, from that load of life, which depresseth all their industry, and cloudeth their worth: *to save a soul alive.*

What shall I say then? My brethren, have not each of us many opportunities, have not all of us this opportunity, of procuring this great and lasting consolation to our souls! have we not now a fair occasion, not only of obeying the commandments of God, in relieving wants; and diffusing, and multiplying happiness; but also, of following his example? And methinks we should all burn, with a noble, and vehement ardor, of imitating the Almighty. There is nothing more customary with the children of this world, than to compliment their prince, by copying after him, even in his very defects, and imperfections. Shall we then fail to pay our obedience to the great majesty of heaven and earth, by imitating his excellencies? those excellencies

cellencies which will resemble us to that most perfect and glorious being whilst we are in this world, and make us happy with him to all eternity in the next.

There are some things wherein (from the sad depravity of our fallen nature) even good men sometimes imitate the worst of beings the devil; there are others wherein too many imitate the most vicious and worst of men. And there is this one, wherein we all of us may imitate the best of all beings; our good, and gracious, and *merciful father, which is in heaven.* Good GOD! do we imitate the worst of beings in some things, the worst of men in many things, and shall we not imitate the best of all beings in one? And surely charity never needed a more earnest recommendation, than at this very time! in an age, where example hath made it infamous to be unmerciful; and custom hath made it criminal at least hath

hath made it infamous to forgive. Alas my brethren, how can we expect mercy and forgiveness from God, when we ourselves are so unrelenting to our brethren: are so cruel and unforgiving in trifles.

It is commonly urged in behalf of charity, that it is the most lasting, as well as the most excellent of christian virtues. The other virtues are temporal, but this, eternal. The other are calculated for this life only; but charity, both for this life, and that which is to come. Need I explain, that by charity, I mean that comprehensive and christian love; which we owe to our fellow-creatures: the chief fruits of which in this world, are seen in relieving their wants, and forgiving their offences: I say this most excellent and truly christian virtue is calculated, both for this life and the next. The same principle of love will subsist in heaven; though the same reasons for

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exerting

exerting it will not; for we shall, there, have no offence to forgive; and no want to relieve. *Faith, hope, and charity; these three, saith the apostle, but the greatest of these is charity; for in heaven, faith shall be swallowed up in intuition; and hope in enjoyment; but charity shall remain for ever.* Other christian virtues may live in this world; but charity shall reign in heaven.

O blessed state! when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and all malice, and revenge shall be purged from our souls. When the little interests of this life shall be of no concern to us. The trifles that contracted our hearts, and created our contests, shall become useless, and insignificant; and the infirmities that inflamed those trifles, shall be no more. When all disputes shall be done away, all factions fall, and all contentions cease! when the greatest enemies shall meet in friendship;

ship, and wonder how they mistook and misrepresented one another. When pride, and envy, and avarice, shall be purified from our hearts; and the happiness, and power, and preheminance of others, shall raise no passions in us, but admiration, and love, and joy. When all the pomps and vanities of this world shall vanish! and goodness, true christian goodness, shall be the only distinction: the only character, and test of greatness. *And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* Dan. xii.

3. When we shall see, even as we are seen: when we shall see God, unshadowed; and ourselves in his similitude; when we shall see him in his glory, and adore him in his excellence, and love him in his mercy. Love him in his infinite goodness and mercy! and love one another in his likeness; and for his sake. And by so doing, become

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happy,

happy, beyond all our hopes and wishes! and the more we continue in knowing, and loving, and adoring, the more shall we insure, and increase that happiness to all eternity.

Let us then begin to exercise that excellent virtue here, which will employ us for ever in heaven! and let us not fail to give good proof of that mercy, to our poor fellow-creatures, as often as we are able; which we ourselves receive from the great creator of heaven and earth, every moment of our lives here below: and which we hope to receive from him, to all eternity in heaven! which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SER-

S E R M O N X.

The great Folly, Iniquity, Absurdity, and crying Guilt of Duelling.

In two Discourses.

Exod. Chap. xx. Ver. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THIS precept being laid down here in general unlimited terms, which, taken in their full extent, equally prohibit taking away the lives of men and of other animals, upon any account whatsoever; the true sense of it, must be learnt, from comparing this, with other parts of the scriptures.

That it was not intended to preclude men from the right of taking

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away

away the lives of others in any circumstance whatsoever is evident from the 2. ver. of the xxii. chapt. of this book of *Exodus*; where the thief found, *breaking up* in the night, that is, breaking into your house, or making use of any force to rob you, is permitted to be slain. And from many other parts of the scriptures it appears, that persons guilty of certain crimes, are expressly commanded to be put to death; such as the witch, the blasphemer, the murderer, the disobedient son, &c.

That the command was not intended, as an absolute prohibition to take away the lives of the inferior creatures, is evident from the grant given to *Noah*, and in him, to all his posterity; in the ix. chapt. of *Gen.* where creatures are given for food, in as ample a manner as the herbs of the field were given before: only with this restraint, that the
blood

blood was not to be eaten with the flesh.

Forasmuch then as neither criminals, nor inferior creatures, are prohibited to be slain by this precept, it follows, that nothing is prohibited by it, but murder: that is, the taking away the life of any man unjustly. In this case, and in this only, are we to understand that denunciation of divine justice to be due.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man: at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

6. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.*

When GOD gave man a right to the creatures for food, prohibiting them to eat the blood with the flesh, in that prohibition he virtually commands them to shed the blood of those creatures, before they made the

flesh their food; and as he knew this power and practice of shedding of blood, would by degrees harden the mind, and be an inlet to cruelty, even to their own species; he guards in the most effectual manner imaginable against that evil, by a dreadful denunciation of vengeance against all those that should dare to shed the blood of man. *And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man: at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Who so shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made be man.* The meaning of all which, is, (and so the best interpreters understand it) that GOD will arm every living creature, both brute, and human, to the destruction of the murderer; as I believe there is scarcely a creature so contemptible, either in earth, or air, whom he hath not
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at one time or other made the instrument of his vengeance on that crying guilt. And, as if all this security were insufficient, he fences in this lord of the nether world, yet farther, with the veneration of his maker's image stamp'd upon him. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

How nobly is this declaration fitted to convey this great document, and impress it deep on the whole race of *Adam*! that *GOD* the great guardian and governor of the world, watched over the lives of men, with so peculiar a providence, that if any man should dare to shed the human blood, sure vengeance should pursue him: that the divine justice would arm the powers of every living creature to his destruction: nay, would arm his own brother's right hand to his ruin.

And

And how nobly is the justice and the solemnity of this declaration asserted in the reason annexed? *For in the image of God made he man.* What lower or less extended vengeance was due to that devoted miscreant, to that sacrilegious arm, that should violate the majesty of the creator's image, where his goodness, his wisdom, and his power had impressed it; than to have the whole creation set in array against him?

Murder is in itself a crime so destructive to society, and so dreadful to nature, that nothing need to be said to aggravate the horror of it to the human mind. But forasmuch as the corruptions of mankind have at length found out a way of perpetrating this crying guilt, in this part of the world, not only always with impunity, but often with applause; have even made it honourable under the fashionable appellation of duelling,

ling. My business at present shall be to examine it in this view. And to shew you by GOD's assistance, that no disguise of name, or power of custom, can make this practice less detestable in the eye of reason, or less criminal in the eye of GOD.

And in order to do this, I shall inquire, first into the origin of this practice of duelling.

And secondly, into the causes and occasions of it. And under this head, shall endeavour to shew you, how wicked, how absurd, how pernicious it is, in all its pretences: and how dreadful in its final issue.

And first as to its original it is agreed by the best writers on this subject, that the practice was in the beginning undoubtedly derived from a principle of humanity; and a tenderness for the lives of mankind. And the best accounts I have been able to collect concerning it are as follow.

When

When nations happened to fall into contentions, which could not be accommodated by treaty, nor determined by hostility, without infinite slaughter, and devastation; to spare the effusion of so much blood, it was sometimes agreed amongst them, to leave the decision of the controversy to the hazard of a few lives. And to agree, that the consequence of such a conquest, should be the same, as if those nations had contended with all their numbers. Such was that of *Paris* and *Menelaus*, in *Homer*; and *Xanthus* and *Melanthius*, kings of *Athens*, and *Bæotia*. Such also, was that, of the *Horatii* and *Curiatii* in the *Roman* history: and of *Edmund Ironside*, and *Canutus* the *Dane* in the history of *England*. Nor is this practice wholly out of use, in the heathen world, at this day. Such was that between the king of *Pegu*, and his
uncle,

uncle, about the kingdom of *Auva*; mentioned by *Mandelfo* in his travels (p. 96).

And this kind of duelling, was, without question, humane, and just: forasmuch as it violated no law of God, or Man. And was in prevention of much greater evil.

The next kind of duelling that we meet with in history, was; when two hostile armies being contiguous to one another, either avowedly, or tacitly agreed, that a chosen champion of either side, should combat for the honour of his country. Such was the duel of *David* and *Goliath*. (i. book of *Samuel*) Such also was that of *Mantius Torquatus*, and after that, of *Valerius Corvinus*, with two *Gauls*, who challenged the valiantest of the *Romans* to single combat. And many later instances of the same kind, And these without question, were lawful. Because permitted by their commanders; and performed, for the

the most part, by persons, whose lives were devoted to the service of the public, in arms. So that whether they fell in single combat, or in a more general engagement; their lives were equally expended in the service of their country.

Another kind of duelling formerly practised in the western part of the world, was, either upon accusation of life, or trial of right; and the occasions of them were as follow.

When any person accused another, of treason, or any other capital crime; the person accused, if he insisted upon his innocence, had a right to retort the lie upon his accuser; and challenge him to make good his charge by combat. Now this practice, although perhaps not strictly justifiable; yet however, much may be said in defence of it. Because it was a terror to false and malicious accusations: and was in the person accused,

accused, an appeal to Almighty God, for the innocence of his heart. Besides, that public justice seems to be concerned, in not easily admitting, that a good subject's life should be taken away, upon a single testimony: which might be grounded either upon mistake, or malice, or corruption. And on the other hand, as single testimonies should not easily be slighted; those certainly must have most weight, which the authors were ready to vouch, at the hazard of their lives. And therefore it is not much to be wondered at, if in ages more martial, and less refined, in the reasons and rules of justice, combats of this kind were allowed of, by public authority. And of these many instances are to be met with in the histories of *France* and *England* *.

As

* But the most extraordinary instance of duelling that I believe ever was met with, was that of [the duel (not only permitted but encouraged by *Charles* the Vth of *France*

As to the other point; *vis.* duels upon trial of right, or inheritance, these also were very antient. Such was the duel of *Corbis* and *Orsua*, two *Spanish* noblemen, about the principality of the city *Ibes*; mentioned by *Livy*, in the twenty-eighth book of his history. And instances of the same kind, are to be met with, in our own histories.

Now these were occasioned, by such disputes, about rights; as were not easily decided by law. And therefore the parties chose to bring

France surnamed the wise) between a man and a dog; whose master had been murdered. The man was a gentleman of the king's court, as the person murdered also had been: and the dog as constantly assaulted him as he met him. And would at any time single him out, even in the midst of a crowd, for the object of his vengeance; and often did so. The king thought there was something very extraordinary in this: and perhaps suspecting, (as both the gentlemen had been of his court) that the death of one of them might be the effect of jealousy, and rivalry in the other, charged him with the murder, which he most solemnly denying, the king asked him, whether he would refer it to the issue of a combat with the dog; which he in the end was forced to do, in a most public, and solemn manner. And the dog having got him down, and seized his throat, he cried out earnestly, for mercy: and owned his guilt.

the controversy to a shorter issue, by combat. And the law allowed them to do so: and these duels proceeded upon the same principles, with those upon accusation of life, last mentioned; and from a persuasion, that God would determine the issue of the combat, according to the rights of the cause.

It was for these reasons, and upon these principles, that duelling obtained, and was allowed in the world, from the earliest ages, until the time of the emperor *Charles the Vth* *, who having charged *Francis* the *French* king with breach of faith; *Francis* retorted the lie upon him, and provoked him to single combat: which, however, that wise and valiant emperor thought fit to decline.

From this accident, the high spirit of the *Gallic* nation, (who are not justly chargeable with want of sufficient bravery) in compliment to their

* See Sir *Walter Rawleigh's* digression about duels.

prince, and the better to demonstrate that injurious and high provocation he had given the emperor; established the giving of the lie, as the highest indignity that could be offered to human nature: and such as every man of honour ought to resent to death; imagining, it would reflect no small glory upon their nation, that the meanest gentleman in *France*, would not put up an indignity, which the great *Charles* the *Vth* endured with patience.

* And as that nation, have been sufficiently successful in giving rise to many other fashions of less consequence; so likewise hath their example derived this wicked and pernicious practice all over *Europe*. And in so doing, been the occasion of more bloodshed in the compass of a few years, than all the duels known in the world from the foundation of it, till that time. Except perhaps such duels as were more antiently

authorized

authorized in their own country, upon trials of right: till those practices were restrained by St. *Lewis* and St. *Philip the fair*. And it is a justice due to the memory of their last great monarch, *Lewis* the XIVth to own, that he did, with great wisdom, and a most religious fortitude, repress this practice throughout his own dominions: and if other princes have not followed his example; it must however be owned, that it was not his fault; if this evil hath not found an effectual remedy, where it had its rise.

As to the duels antiently in use, they were, as I before observed, founded, for the most part, upon humanity, and justice: upon the honour of nations: and upon trials of right, and vindication of innocence: and that too by public authority. And were, in some sort, appeals to Almighty God. Whereas those of the last and the present age, if not

in direct opposition to all these great ends, are at least utterly destitute of every one of them; founded upon fantastic and absurd *points of honour*! points of honour as they are called; but in truth, *points of infamy*! nor is it possible it should be otherwise; when they are acted in direct contradiction to the public good; to public authority; to religion, and virtue of every kind. As will appear by examining this matter a little more exactly.

And in order to do this, give me leave to lay down the following positions, as undoubted truths.

First, that honour with regard to others, is nothing but the fame of virtue: that is, it is that reputation, which arises from the opinion which mankind conceive of our virtue; attended with esteem, and regard; the natural consequence, and in some sort, the natural reward of virtue, and worth of every kind. First, I say, true honour with regard to
others,

others, is fame arising from the reputation of virtue: and secondly, with regard to ourselves, true honour, is the utmost refinement and perfection of virtue, in the discharge of every duty in life. And this will appear evidently from asking ourselves these two plain questions. First, Why we honour any man? And secondly, Who they are whom we honour? Do we honour any man for cowardice, or theft, or villany of any kind? No, we honour men for courage, for honesty, for integrity. We honour nothing but virtue, and worth; we can honour nothing else: and what is strictly and properly called true honour in any man, is nothing but refinement in virtue.

For example; a man of honour will not fail to pay a just debt, altho' the law could not oblige him to it. A man of honour will keep his word, altho' no man alive could prove the violation of it upon him; nor exact

the performance of it. A man of honour will return the pledge committed to his trust, altho' the owner were dead, and no mortal conscious to it.

And the reason is obvious ; a man of honour hath more regard to truth and justice, than he hath either to self-interest, or the terrors of the law : truth and justice are the rules and measures of his conduct : and therefore a man of honour will tell the truth, although he be sure to suffer by it. And although he might disguise it without any possible damage, or reproach, other, than from his own conscience.

Such is a man of honour in his private capacity.

In a public character, a man of honour will pique himself upon discharge of duty to the public, on every just occasion ; what danger or distress soever attend that discharge. And altho' neither danger nor infamy attended the neglect of it. For

For instance, in the army, a man of honour will not fail to discharge every part of duty incumbent upon him. Neither will he let the meanest soldier exceed him in the lowest point of discipline. Altho' possibly he might do so, without infamy, or punishment.

A man of honour will maintain the post assigned him, although ten thousand dangers and difficulties attended it. Neither will he hesitate to go upon the most difficult attempt, which his duty points out to him, altho' infinite hazard await it. And so in every other instance. The man of honour is studious to discharge his duty to the public above every consideration, either of danger or advantage or of whatever consequence to himself! and so in every other condition of life. A man of honour will discharge every virtue proper to that condition, with the utmost exactness, and in the highest refinement!

ment! for honour, as I before observed to you, is nothing but the reputation arising from the practice of *virtue* with regard to *others*; and with regard to *ourselves*, the steady practice of it, in all the refinement it is capable of: especially such virtues as are proper to that peculiar character.

To illustrate this yet farther, in other instances. Honour in a judge, is more peculiarly and emphatically a conscientious dispensation of justice; free from all partiality and corruption. In a woman, it is a nice regard to chastity, and the fame of it. In a soldier, fortitude: in a prince the preservation of his faith, his dominions, and the good of his people. Honour in private life, is strict justice, and inviolable regard to promises, and engagements of every kind: this is the true notion of honour. *Virtue* is the standard by which it must be eternally judged: and
 whoever

whoever goes about to separate it from virtue, in any character, or condition, or circumstance of life; doth at the same instant, destroy it; and turn it into *infamy*; for infamy is nothing but the fame of vice: that is, that scandal, and evil report, which necessarily attend vice, and villany of every kind; in the opinion of all wise and good men.

Let duelling then be examined by this test; whether it be honourable, or infamous.

And first, the great occasion of duelling is giving the lie: and a lie is infamous, because it is an imputation upon our virtue of veracity.

Now this imputation, is either just, or unjust. If the imputation be just, certainly there can be no injury in affixing it. And as to the indignity that may accrue from such an imputation; the criminal is himself the author of that. You did the injury, and fixed the indignity; when
you

you were guilty of the evil that deserved it. And he that imputeth that guilt to you, doth you no more injury, than he that should tell you, you were handsome, or valiant, when you were so. And the way to wipe off this imputation, is, to repent, and offend against truth no more.

Well! but your honour is injured, and you must repair it by fortitude. How! injure an honour which hath no existence! what an abuse of words is this? you forfeited your honour the moment you told the lie. And now you would repair that crime, by committing a greater. You would repair falsehood, by murder. But say the imputation is unjust: one would think the natural way of taking off this imputation, should be, by manifesting the truth; and letting the whole world see the falsehood of the charge laid against you. And if this be done, then certainly no infamy rests upon you. But re-
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turns that instant upon the author. For then, the lie is, of necessity, and from the nature of the thing, retorted upon him.

But still he hath endeavoured to do you an injury; and perhaps this imputation, altho' now cleared, hath been of real ill consequence to you: I answer, as to his endeavour of injuring you, he hath infamy for his pains. And if he hath any remain either of equity, or modesty, or good manners, he will take shame to himself for so doing, by a proper submission! if he hath not, he is no otherwise to be accounted of than a bear and a brute! but however, all brutality is not to be chastised by death. It is sufficiently punished by the natural infamy and contempt that await it. And to them you may refer it. And for this you have an example of sufficient weight in the conduct of *Socrates* (a man of eminent fortitude) on a like occasion, who

who being rudely treated by a worthless fellow, as he passed in the public street; took no notice of it. And being asked by one of his companions how he could bear such an indignity from such a miscreant? calmly answered, *if an ass should kick at me, would you have me kick again?* we have also a like instance in the elder *Cato*, who when a beastly fellow spit in his face only answered, if any one should ask me hereafter whether you have any mouth * I know what to tell him. Thus are trifling indignities to be treated, but if any person hath done you a real injury, the courts of justice are open. And the officers of justice who preside in them, are at least as skilful, and as equitable judges of the nature of the injury, and the reparation due to it, as you can be.

* The same *Latin* word as signifies a mouth, and a face, and a shameless man among the *Romans* was called a man that had no face.

Well,

Well, but a man of honour scorns to go to law for an abuse, whilst he wears a sword to right himself! what strange language, and how senseless a rodomantade is this! a man of honour scorn the rules of justice. Is then contempt of public justice the effect of honour? or rather is it consistent with any degree of it. Honour is the refinement of virtue! is it virtue to despise the public order and peace of society? nay more to insult it? honour is the exact discharge of every duty proper to our station. Is not submission to public authority, the first duty of every man, of every station, in society? and is honour a principle contradictory to virtue, and duty of every kind; if it be, away with it, from all civil and religious communities. The king upon the throne, is bound by the laws of his country; and is a man of honour exempt from them? is he greater than his prince? this
pretence

pretence then is stupid, and senseless to the last degree. And therefore there is reason to believe, that generally speaking it is but a pretence. And that the real truth is, that most quarrels of this kind, are in themselves so very trifling, or scandalous; that the authors are ashamed to let them appear in the courts of justice. And if so, what folly and madness is it, to risk your own life and your neighbour's; upon a point of so trivial, or shameful a nature, that it will not bear to be seriously examined, by the rules of reason and justice.

But still it may be urged, that honour is (with regard to others) the reputation arising from the fame of virtue; and vindicating an injury done to us, is an indication of courage: and consequently is attended with a fame of virtue. I answer, that when courage is a virtue, it is always employed in the discharge of
some

some duty, the neglect of which would be a vice. For courage is not in itself a virtue. It is so only when it is employed in a good cause. Otherwise, it is heat and rashness. For as it is not the punishment that makes the martyr, so it is not fighting that makes the hero. It is the cause that constitutes both. Nay even fighting in a good cause, is not virtue; unless it be also in discharge of duty. And therefore it was that, *Manlius* the *Roman* consul, executed his own son, for fighting with *Geminus*, the general of the *Latins*, contrary to his orders; although he came off with conquest. As you may read in the viiith book of *Levy*. Here the cause was good. He fought with the enemy of his country. The event also was glorious. He slew and spoiled the hostile general, which was the heighth of all glory in arms. But yet all this, being against duty; instead of being honourable, became infamous.

infamous. And he died like the meanest slave; by the hands of the common executioner.

And thus having shewn you the origin of duelling; the present degeneracy of that practice; and the false pretences of honour upon which it is built: I should now proceed to inquire into the true causes of that fashionable infamy. But this (the time not now permitting) must be deferred to another occasion.

S E R-

S E R M O N XI.

The great Folly, Iniquity, Absurdity, and crying Guilt of Duelling.

In two Discourses.

Exod. Chap. xx. Ver. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

IN a former discourse on these words, I entered into a dissertation upon the rise and cause of duelling in the world; in which I shewed you, that it had its original from humanity and mercy. When hostile armies, to spare the effusion of human blood, agreed to leave the decision of their disputes to the combat of one or more chosen champions, on either side: and that it was af-

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terwards allowed in christian countries, on trials of right and innocence; which could not otherwise be so easily decided.

I likewise shewed you, the original of that kind of duelling now in fashion amongst us. That it had its beginning, from the lie given by *Francis* the first of *France* to the emperor *Charles* the Vth; from whence, giving the lie became the mortal offence among those who have the assurance to call themselves men of honour. On this occasion, I inquired into the true nature of honour: and shewed you that it was nothing with regard to the world, but the fame of virtue; and with regard to ourselves, a refined sense of virtue; and a strictness in the practice of it, even where no law could punish the violation of it; or witness reproach it. I then proceeded to examine the present practice of duelling by this test. And shall

shall now proceed to examine it further upon the same principle.

I observed to you, in the foregoing discourse that the mortal offence among duellists, was giving the lie. Now it is worth while to inquire, whether their resentment of this offence, be owing to a right sense of honour; that is, a high regard to the virtue of veracity; and a just indignation for being thought destitute of it; or whether it be only a resentment of custom, and conceit; without any regard to virtue.

For if they act in this case from a principle of honour, that is, from a regard to the virtue of veracity, it is plain they will have the same regard to it, in every other circumstance of life. Whereas the very contrary to all this, is remarkable in many of them. And nothing is more notorious in their practice, than customary lying and swearing, and breach of promises and engagements

of every kind. And surely, he that promiseth to pay a just debt, on a certain day, and faileth to do so, otherwise than through unavoidable necessity, both lieth, and is unjust at the same time. And in this sense, how many of these heroes are liars upon record, for breach of word, and bond? and yet I do not find it customary with them, to challenge the agent who manageth the prosecution; nor the judge who determineth the cause against them; for wounding their honour.

This then is the case. Simple lying, is in the opinion of these brave spirits, a mortal offence. But when perjury or injustice is added to it; then it becomes innocent; and leaves no blemish, or stain upon their honour.

From hence it appeareth, that pride is the fountain of this vice. These duellists, not having virtue enough to be ashamed of doing evil, have

have yet vanity enough not to bear its being imputed to them. And therefore they would reconcile contradictions. They would be honourable in their fame, altho' they are infamous in their practice. And the way to be so, is, to present death upon the point of their sword, to any one that shall dare to taint their honour. That honour, which they have long since forfeited. And have now no more title to, than to the money, or the estates they have spent. Besides, what but intolerable vanity and impudence, can set men so far above all laws, above all government and jurisdiction; as to assume to themselves a right both of judging and executing in their own cause; in direct contempt of all authority, both of God and man? and is the wretch that dare do this, a fit member of civil, or religious society? or rather should he not be regarded as a monster and outcast of the earth?

and banished the society of every thing, but chains and dungeons; and the lashes of his own conscience. And therefore if religion and government were no way concerned in this practice, and the influence of it reached no farther than those infamous wretches who are the common authors of it; nothing were more desirable in society, than that this profligate race should go on, like the *cadmean* brethren, to butcher one another with all convenient dispatch; and rid mankind of such a pest, without the trouble or expence of public executions. But till that be done, let them be abandoned like lepers. And let no man that would be clear either in his reputation or in his conscience, converse with them; upon pain of infamy. And surely *Solomon* rightly adviseth, to drive such a one from our conversation, *Cast out the scorner (saith he) and contention*

contention shall go out : yea strife and reproach shall cease.

Another parent of this practice is cowardice. And however strange this may appear at first sight ; a little reasoning will clearly evince it to be so. For first, most men, altho' they have not courage ; yet greatly affect a reputation of it. That is, such a reputation, as may secure them from insults another time. And the way to do this, is to seem hot, and fiery ; and challenge some person of note for the sword ; in hopes, that some lucky accident, or the interposition of friends (which it is in every man's power to procure) may prevent the ill consequences of the quarrel. And so, they may at once establish their reputation of courage, and secure their persons. And all this is plainly the effect of cowardice. And it hath been justly observed by men of experience, in transactions of this kind ; that out-

ward blusterings, are very often, only a mask, to conceal inward tremblings: and that perhaps on both sides. Infomuch, that the words of *St. Paul*, used upon another occasion are yet strictly applicable upon this. *ii. Cor. vii, 5, Without were fightings; within were fears.*

But duelling is yet more so, considered in another light. For cowardice is nothing but fearing against reason. Whereas a rational fear, is no more cowardice; than a rational hope is presumption and impudence. Now it is agreed among mankind, that of all the duels that have been fought in the world, much the greater number had been declined; did the persons concerned think they could fairly save their honour in doing so. And this, men of known and approved courage are often heard to declare, from their own knowledge, and even in their own case. Now if this be an irrational, and unjust fear,

fear, then whatever is acted upon this principle, is the effect of cowardice. And that it is altogether irrational, is evident. For what can be more foolish, than to fear infamy from discharge of duty; from obedience to the divine authority, and the laws of the land? for this would be to reverse all the principles and foundations of honour and infamy! to call virtue vice, and vice virtue. And is literally to execute that woe upon ourselves; which God Almighty hath denounced against all those *that call evil good, and good evil.* And I appeal to every man of common sense, whether any person, that had courage enough to act upon these principles; and to declare to the whole world that he did so; could possibly suffer in his reputation of virtue; that is, in his honour, by so doing? or rather would not rise in both, in the esteem of all wise and good men! nay whether those

those very bravoës, who extorted this declaration from him; would not, if they had any remains either of virtue or of common sense, reverence him for it, in their hearts*.

And God be praised, there is yet so much virtuous courage in the world; that several men of known, and approved valour, have openly declared against duels; and have refused challenges sent them, in avowance of duty.

And therefore the real truth is, that all those who allow themselves in this practice of duelling, do unknowingly conclude themselves under the basest and most scandalous

* And to this purpose I have somewhere met with the following relation of Sir *Walter Rawleigh*; a man of known courage and honour; who being very injuriously treated, challenged, and upon refusal spit upon, by a rash hot-headed youth, and that too in public, taking out his handkerchief with great calmness made him only this return, *Young man if I could as easily wipe off your blood from my conscience, as I can this injury from my face, I would this moment take away your life.* The consequence was, that the youth, struck with a sudden and strong sense of his misbehaviour, fell upon his knees, and begged forgiveness.

character

character in life ; cowards to men ; and bravoës to God ! *cowards to the opinion of the idlest, the weakest, and the most worthless part of mankind ! and bravoës to the great governor of the universe : to the wisest, the mightiest, and the best of beings !* They fear, what a wise man should scorn above all things, the opinion of the thoughtless, the ignorant, and the insignificant. And they scorn, what a wise man should fear and reverence above every thing else in the world ; the violation of duty, and the wrath of God ! so that this practice is plainly an absurd composition of pride, and folly, and cowardice, and hardened impiety.

But here it may be objected ; how it is possible for a man to risk his life out of fear ! to this I answer, that nothing is more common in the world to this day, nor more obvious in the history of it, throughout all ages ; for (as my lord *Bacon* rightly
2 observeth)

observeth) there is no passion in the mind, so weak, but that it mastereth the fear of death; revenge triumpheth over it, love flighteth it, honour aspireth to it, grief flieth to it, and fear preventeth it. Nay pity hath sometimes provoked death; as we find that when *Otho* slew himself, many others followed, out of mere compassion and tenderness to their soveraign. And *Otho* himself is commonly instanced, in the number of those, that have died through cowardice. That is, either thro' fear of death, or infamy, and reproach.

Petronius arbiter, master of *Nero's* pleasures, cut his veins, because his master frowned upon him. *Hannibal*, for fear of being given up to the *Romans*, poisoned himself, as did *Demosthenes* for fear of being given up to *Antipater*. And *Labienus* the historian mentioned by *Seneca*, because he would not outlive the infamy of having his books burnt

burnt by public edict, burnt himself. Nay the great *Cato* plainly executed himself thro' fear of *Cesar's* mercy. At least it is certain, that he and all the rest, died thro' cowardice, even upon the principles of heathenism: for all the wiser antients were agreed, that man had no dominion over his own life. But was placed in the world, like a centinel upon his post. And what more scandalous cowardice, than to desert the station appointed to us; because of some unforeseen difficulties that attend the maintaining it.

And of all fears the mind can be possessed with, fear of the opinion of fools, is, beyond all question the most scandalous! and therefore such as risk their lives upon that principle, are the basest of all cowards, both to reason and virtue.

But still custom and the practice of the world is against you. Why, and for that very reason *St. Paul* adviseth

viseeth you against it. *Be not conformed to this world, nor to any wicked custom* however prevalent in it. Custom, altho' founded upon reason and convenience, is at best no rule of action or life. But if it be in opposition to both, it is surely a wretched plea for irrational actions. And is only the last, and most senseless refuge of affectation and stupidity! now duelling is manifestly absurd, to the last degree, although it were not impious. For supposing I am injured; and that I had a right to vindicate myself with my own arm; can any thing be more ridiculous, than to put myself upon an equal hazard with him that injured me in that vindication? nay perhaps upon a much greater. Whereas in reason, I ought to punish his offence, with hazard to him alone that committed it. Else, I only add an injury of my own, to one that he hath already done me; or give him a fair chance

chance of doing me a greater. Than which, nothing can be more absurd. And besides the stupidity of it, in this respect; it is absurd also in every other. Forasmuch as it is neither a proper test of the courage of the combatants; nor the justice of their cause. Not of the first, for how can that be a proper arbitration of courage, where a coward that is perfect in his sword shall kill the bravest man alive; neither can that be an arbitration of the justice of a cause; where the decision dependeth upon the skill of the parties. And where the injured may fall, and the injurer triumph in a second offence; and of a far higher nature than the first.

But besides the folly and stupidity of this practice; I beseech you to consider the iniquity of it. What right have you over that life which you risk, or over that which you invade? should you attempt upon your neighbour's

neighbour's property by force, you would doubtless be deemed a robber, and a ruffian. And are you not worse, both in the eye of reason, and the judgment of the law, when you attempt upon his life? for there, you add robbery to murder. Nay robbery in a variety of relations. The government is robbed of a subject. The society of a member. The widow of a kind and careful husband. And the orphan of a tender parent. And yet he that perpetrateth this complicated villany, either out of pique, or pride, or malice; or perhaps out of gaiety of heart, (as the *French* call it) would be deemed a man of honour! than which there cannot be a more monstrous abuse of words; or a greater insult upon the common sense of mankind.

It is upon these principles, that the *Turks* suffer no such thing as duels in their dominions. And that reproof, which *Busbequius* tells us,
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a *Basha* at *Constantinople* gave a valiant man, for boasting that he had challenged his enemy; is very well worth our notice. *How durst thou* (said he) *challenge thy fellow-soldier to a duel? what, was there never a christian to fight with? do both of you eat the emperor's bread? yet forsooth you must go about to take one another's lives? what precedent had you for this? don't you know that whoever of the twain had died, the emperor had lost a subject?* Whereupon he was immediately haled to prison, where he lay pining many months; and was at last with difficulty released: yet with the loss of his reputation, *p.* 197, 198.

And thus I have examined into the nature of this detestable practice of duelling: and shewn you, how destructive it is of all those ends, for which that practice was first introduced and allowed in the world. I have shewn you that in its present
U dege-

degeneracy, it is base and infamous. It is infamous in its origin, (the child of vice and ignorance, begotten by pride and folly) nor is it less infamous in its practice! if acting in direct contradiction to all the principles of honour and virtue, and duty of every kind, can give a just title to infamy; in a word, I have shewn you how stupid, how impious, how abominable it is in all its circumstances, and pretences. The vaunt indeed of valour, but for the most part the real effect of cowardice! and that too the most shameful cowardice imaginable! the fear of the opinion of fools! a pretence of heroism, unknown to the great heroes of antiquity. To the *Grecians*, and to the *Romans*: the greatest examples of mortal prowess! and at the same time greatly degenerating both from the honour and the piety of that practice in our own ancestors.

And now my brethren what is the issue of all this extravagance? dread-

ful either way. If the man hath slain his antagonist, he hath perhaps in his person, slain his best friend. At least he ceaseth to be his enemy that instant: and the sword hath no sooner pierced his breast, but horror and remorse have pierced his murderer, have stabbed him to the soul! his vanity sinks into dejection: and his anger into anguish: and all his excess of wrath and revenge rush into yet greater excesses of sorrow, and self-detestation; and all the distraction of distress. The dreadful deed is no sooner done, but he would give the whole world, nay he would almost die to undo it! and doubtless the exchange were in many cases wise were it possible to be effected. If this murderer's death could buy off all the horrors of his conscience, and anguish of his remaining life, given up to remorse and misery! since the same hand that fixed a dagger into his brother's breast, did, in

that very act, fix a fury in his own: to sting his conscience, and to poison his quiet, to the last moment of his life.

But my brethren the greatest terror is yet behind. If this detestable practice ended only in folly and pride, and tumult, nay if it terminated only in murder, and remorse; if blood could expiate the guilt, or the grave hide it; or misery and distraction atone for it, possibly something might be said to palliate the horror of it! but when, in all appearance, the issue is yet more dreadful! when the poor wretch is sent down quick to perdition, with all his offences upon his head: and in the very act, perhaps, of the greatest guilt he is capable of committing. Good God! who can bear the horror? *for this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black* (saith the prophet Jeremiah iv. 28.) *for this land shall be visited; for as a fountain casteth*
out

out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her: before me, continually is grief and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, saith the Lord; lest I make thee desolate: a land not inhabited. Jer. vi. 7, 8. For this gird you with sack-cloth, lament and howl; that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned back from you. Jer. iv. 8.

Let me conclude with that pathetic exhortation of *Isaiah* to the Jews in the first chapter of his prophecy *Isaiah*, chap. i. 15, 16, wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, saith the Lord, lest when you spread forth your hands I hide mine eyes from you, yea when you make many prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood. From this guilt, and from the vengeance due to it. GOD of his infinite mercy deliver this city, and this nation; through
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the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

How criminal and utterly inconsistent with duty the practice of duelling is in the gentlemen of the army, may be seen by the following extract from the Articles of War.

No officer or soldier shall presume to send a challenge to any other officer or soldier, to fight a duel, upon pain, if a commissioned officer, of being cashiered, if a non-commissioned officer, or soldier, of suffering corporal punishment, at the discretion of a court-martial.

Whatsoever officer or soldier shall upbraid another for refusing a challenge, shall himself be punished as a challenger; and we hereby acquit and discharge all officers and soldiers of any disgrace or opinion of disadvantage, which might arise from their having refused to accept of challenges, as they will have only acted in obedience to our orders, and done their duty as good soldiers, who subject themselves to discipline. *Articles of War, Sect. vii. Art. 2, 5.*

S E R-

SERMON XII.

The great Evil, and Folly, and
Guilt, of Gaming.

Rom. Chap. xii. Ver. 2.

*Be not conformed to this world, but
be ye transformed, by the re-
newing of your mind, that ye may
prove what is that good, and ac-
ceptable, and perfect will of God.*

THE fundamental and essen-
tial distinction between the
heathen, and christian religion, is
no where so clearly alluded to, and
in effect summed up, as in the words
now recited. *Be not conformed to
this world, &c.*

The corruptions of the heathen
world depressed their gods into the

lowest degree of brutality; transformed them from the character of divine beings into the conditions, and qualities of beasts of all kinds; and of consequence debased their adorers in the same proportion. The purpose of the christian religion is the direct contrary: to raise, and to refine. To raise mortals into the noblest characters, and conditions of immortal beings: to raise them into the resemblance, of the GOD of heaven.

This is the plain purpose of that noble exhortation in my text, *be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* The true way of proving what that will of GOD is, after we have well studied it, is to be conformed to it. And consequently, to be as far removed from the condition, and character of this world

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as from darkness to light, and brutal corruption to divine purity. And therefore to exhort, and as far as in them lieth to raise men from the grovelling pursuits and purposes of this low earth, to the noblest, the most exalted aims, and ends of heavenly piety, and purity is the great business of the ministers of the gospel. And as the first step to purity, is, to quit pollution; the business of this, and some following discourses shall be to warn you of the evil of many practices, too prevalent in the world: which have not only lost all their deformity in the higher, and more fashionable part of it, but have also gained, not only much countenance, but even some degree of credit, and applause from them. And therefore, call aloud for rebuke, and chastisement. I shall at present mention but these three: duelling, gaming, and luxury.

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The first of these I have already treated of, in the two preceding discourses. I come now to consider the second, namely, gaming. And to urge the best reasons I can, against this wicked, and pernicious practice. And to shew you, that it is of the last consequence to you, to fly it with the utmost caution.

For first, all gaming for any thing considerable, is founded upon avarice: and is if not a direct, yet (what is much worse) a deliberate violation, of the tenth commandment: and therefore in this respect, it is perhaps the vice of all others, most inexcusable: in crimes of other kinds; surprise, inattention, and violence of passion, altho' they cannot wholly excuse the committal, yet doubtless they alleviate much of the guilt. But here, all these pretences are taken away. And men are so far from being under the influence of any of these

these alleviating circumstances, that nothing is more notorious than their proceeding to the practice of this vice, with the utmost caution and coolness of judgment. And we are told, that it is in contests of this kind, as in war: he that hath most presence of mind, and is least embarrassed, is generally most successful.

Besides the deliberate impiety of this vice, it were worth while to consider also, the folly of it. For what can be more absurd, than for any man in his senses, without any necessity, to put it to the chance of a die, whether his house, his money, or his estate, shall be his own, or another man's? So that nothing but a desperate state of affairs, can ground the least appearance of a reasonable plea for such a practice. And even in that case, if the property of a third person can any way be hazarded by the risk we run; then
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is great dishonesty added to great imprudence. And therefore suppose there were no impiety in this practice, yet such is the folly and danger of it, that you can scarce invent a case where it would be pardonable even upon the score of stupidity: unless you could suppose a fool of wealth, so immensely rich, that losses of that kind could not affect the main of his fortune, but that supposition is impossible. Since it is evident, that no fortune can be so large, and inexhaustible, as to be able to supply an extravagance of this kind. There is no fund adequate to gaming: nor can you imagine any condition of life so immensely affluent, as may not be exhausted, by an extravagance of this kind, in one hour.

Well, but men may limit themselves in this extravagance: and resolve never to exceed a certain sum: true, men may easily make such resolutions; but the difficulty is, how
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to keep them : when losses, and ill luck have fretted their spirits, and inflamed their blood, to such a degree, that they have lost the thoughts of every thing, but recovery, and revenge, and I dare say, if it were possible to make an estimate of such resolutions, not one in ten thousand of them hath ever been kept. Nay is it not madness, to expect, that men in so raving, and distracted a condition, as losing gamesters, are often observed to be ; that will not stick to abuse their best friends ; will swear a thousand vain oaths in a breath ; profane, nay blaspheme the sacred name of GOD, without regret ; to expect that creatures in that condition, should regard resolutions of caution, and prudence ; is an extravagance of folly, almost equal to theirs. And indeed, such is the distraction, and extravagance of men in that condition ; that I know nothing more likely to deter
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any man of reflection, either from entering into such a course of life, or continuing in it; than a calm observation of that series of distractions, which if I am well informed (for I thank God I speak not by experience) tear the breast of a losing gamester, in the course of a few hours. The ravings of a fever, and the pangs of a convulsion, are nothing to them. Nay in all appearance, they are the liveliest emblems, of the torments of hell! made up of a wild mixture of fury, and anguish, regret and despair! so that if nothing but the philosophy of life, were concerned in this practice; a man of common prudence would avoid it, as a pestilence; as the greatest bane, to the peace, and tranquillity of life.

But it may be urged, that there are men of such cool and calm tempers, as never to be ruffled, or heated, either into any discomposure of their temper, or disturbance of their
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understanding on such occasions. And therefore, these men seem to be an exception, to all the prohibitions of prudence, that lie against gaming. In answer to this, it cannot I believe be denied, that there are such men in the world: but then I believe it cannot well be denied, that they are men of the worst characters in it. They are men, who have studied all the arts of fraud, and villany of every kind, in perfection. Black, fawnine, deliberate villains, who lay themselves out by all the wiles of flattery, wine, seduction, and deceit, to draw the unwary into their snares: and when they once get them there, destroy them without remorse. They are to the light unthinking part of the world, what the spider is to the fly: they wait with cool, deliberate, unwearied patience, till they get their prey within their nets, and then drain out their vitals without remorse; or to speak more properly, enjoy

enjoy their dying complaints. One would imagine the psalmist had this scene in view, in his description of those hardened miscreants, whose snares, and nets, are spread for the innocent. *He lieth in wait to catch or* (as I think might better be translated) *seize the poor*: (that is the poor deluded mortals that fall into his snares) *he doth seize the poor, when he draweth him into his net. In his secret places doth he murder the innocent.* Forgetting, that *God beholdeth all his ungodliness and wrong*: and will in his own time repay it, with dreadful vengeance. And therefore well doth St. Paul admonish, *1 Thess. iv. 6, That no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.*

But still it may be urged, that some men can play with so much prudence, and temper, as never to engage for more than trifles; consequently

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quently to be perfectly unconcerned at any inconsiderable loss that may ensue. True, some men doubtless can do so, and to such, playing for trifles, may doubtless be as innocent, as any other Amusement whatsoever. But how few of these are there in the world in comparison of those, who begin with trifles, and warmed with their losses, are carried on by degrees, to boundless extravagance? and even of those, who can lose with temper, how many are there, to whom, money and time so spent can become an agreeable reflection? and to whom, it would not have been infinitely more satisfactory upon reflection, to have employed that time, to the attainment of some good purpose in life; or that trifle to the relief of the poor. Which, however inconsiderable to the loser, might, to them, be of the last consequence? and therefore, altho' gaming in a

low and temperate manner, may possibly be numbered among the innocent diversions of life; yet probably it is the most dangerous, and, to the eye of reason, the least desirable of them all.

And if this practice be liable to all these objections, and difficulties, under the conduct of the greatest prudence, and calmness of temper, in the best company, and in all the alleviating circumstances that can possibly attend it; how infinitely detestable, and abominable must it be, in all its deformity? in places of public resort, and in the society of the most profligate, and abandoned part of mankind: for such beyond all question, are the herd of common gamesters. Men of desperate fortunes, no education, no principles, no conscience, no science (except that of defrauding all they deal with, by all the low arts of deceit,

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and

and perjury) engaged in such practices, as naturally tend to create quarrels, and contentions, with all their horrid consequences. And lead men into riots, and excesses of every kind. For surely, of these may it be strictly said, what *Salomon* observeth of the wicked, in the ivth chapt. of his Proverbs. *They sleep not, except they have done mischief: and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.* And therefore, for men of liberal education, and good morals, men of any valuable character, to mix with such a herd, would be an argument of more desperate folly, than for a man in sound health, to throw himself into a pest house: inasmuch as the corruption of the mind, is of vastly worse consequence, than the infection of the body. And how hard it will be to avoid such

corruption, from such society, is easy to conceive. *Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled therewith?* And therefore, Solomon adviseth, not only, not to enter into the path of the wicked, but carefully to avoid it. *Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away* *.

It may be urged in the last place, in behalf of gaming, that many men have raised their fortunes by it. And that since it is not expressly forbidden in the scriptures, it may be practised without sin. To this I answer, that altho' there be no express prohibition

* Besides; these are not the diversions fitted for your condition of life; for if such without question, are best suited to you, as exercise the body, and hinder it from becoming languid, and enervate, under the activity of the mind. And as for the mind itself, that should seem to be best relieved, by a free, and chearful conversation upon those subjects of learning which it hath been employed upon for some time before; for the mind naturally recoileth and dwelleth upon those subjects it hath been some time engaged in; and is never more agreeably entertained, than when it is indulged in recollecting and unfolding its notions, and comparing its own reflections and deductions with those of a sincere and studious friend.

This added when preached in the college, Dublin.

of it, in scripture, yet is it plainly implied in the tenth commandment. And as to the other part of the objection, it is notorious, that a thousand fortunes are ruined by it, for one that is raised. So that in this respect, a particular curse seems to attend it. And surely it is little less than madness, to propose to establish your fortune, by any method, where the odds are in fact so greatly against you. * Besides, that gaming is not in the number of those arts, by which God Almighty hath ordained that the good things of this world should be acquired: for these, are

* And for these reasons. Besides the inconsistency of this practice with the laws of God and the land, 'tis a severer reflection upon those that are more conversant in inquiries into the wisdom, and goodness of the divine providence, to allow themselves in a practice, which is not in its nature ordinable to, nor rightly consistent with, the great, and excellent ends, of either of these. And altho' possibly, your abilities, and attainments of learning, might be also of advantage to you in this craft, yet is it infinitely beneath you, to debase, and profane them, by applying to such mean, and scandalous arts.

This added when preached in the college.

the natural effects of honesty, and industry, in the improvement, and application of our best abilities, both of body and mind. And if God Almighty had made them ordinarily the purchase of chance, and vice, and idleness; he had destroyed the right order of things; and substituted the worst means in the room of the best: and consequently, taken away much, from the wisdom and beauty of his own establishment.

If then you would avoid a deliberate if not a direct violation, of the tenth commandment; together with infinite disquiet, and distraction; and the severe reflections of time, and fortune ill spent: if you would shun the society of the vilest, and most abandoned part of mankind, and the double ruin of soul and body, consequent to such a commerce: if ye would act consistently with those laws of God and man, that are the rules
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of your duty, and that wise order of things, established by the divine wisdom, for the attainment of the good things of this world; renounce that impious, that absurd, that detestable practice of gaming.

the practice of gaming, impious, that absurd, that detestable things of this world; renounce that dom, for the attainment of the good things, obtained by the divine will of your duty, and that wife order of

S E R M O N XIII.

The great Evil, and Folly, and
Guilt of Luxury in Dress.

Rom. Chap. xii. Ver. 2.

*Be not conformed to this world; but
be ye transformed, by the re-
newing of your mind, that ye may
prove what is that good, and ac-
ceptable, and perfect will of God.*

THE next corruption I propos-
ed to guard you against, was
luxury: and this I shall consider un-
der the two heads of dress, and food.

And first for luxury of dress.
Dress being intended for distinc-
tion of the several orders, and sta-
tions of life, as well as for orna-
ment, and security from the weather.

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It is no wonder, if in the wiser nations, and ages of the world, regulations in this point, have been thought worthy, the consideration of the legislature, as a matter of great importance, to the manners of mankind; to keep the several orders and degrees of men within their own sphere, and their own district; and not suffer them to incroach, either upon the character, or condition of their superiors. And this, without question, was of excellent use, to temper the minds of mankind; and abate that vanity, which, so strongly exerts itself, in the spirits of most men: or if not abate it, at least direct it, to some useful, and excellent purpose of life. Thus

For example, in the common wealth of *Rome*, (in all its ages of virtue and discipline) a *Roman* knight with the abilities of an angel, was confined to the equestrian robe, and ring. Nor could the wealth, and merit of ten senators united in his
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own person, purchase him any distinction of dress, superior to his own order: so that, in this case, either his vanity of wealth, and power, must subside, or else, it must exert itself in such acts of virtue, as might raise him to a higher station, and intitle him to nobler ornaments, and badges of more exalted distinction? and this without question was of excellent use. But when luxury increased with wealth, and conquest; and vanity abounded, as virtue decayed; then did they find out new arts of varying. And adorning, and rendering that dress more luxurious, and expensive: which, for fashion, and kind, they were under a necessity of continuing still the same. And this luxury of dress, as well as that of food, being found to have very ill effects, upon the morals of the citizens; and also, to be of very ill consequence to the public; was often regulated by sumptuary laws: which limited the expence of cloathing,

ing, to a determined sum : and such as was not to be exceeded, but upon severe penalties. And this again, repressed the exorbitant vanity of mankind : and reduced it in some measure, within those bounds, and limitations, proper to each character, and condition in life. And this hath often been practiced, more, or less, by all wise nations of the world ; as the exigency of the times required.

And I believe it must be owned, that if this article of luxury ever needed a restraint in these nations, it needeth it now, in the highest degree, and with the utmost severity.

It is but too notorious, that the pride, and power, of a vain neighbouring nation, hath infected the whole world around it, with vanities of various kinds. Particularly, that of light, luxurious, expensive dress. Which taking root in a rich nation, (like evil weeds in a luxuriant soil) hath over-run it in a monstrous manner. Not only to the disgrace

of its native modesty, and decency; but greatly to the destruction of its true religion and virtue.

There is something in the glare of a gaudy dress, that tendeth not only to dissipate the spirits, but even to tincture the mind with congenial vanities, with light, fantastic ideas, and specious appearances, and of consequence to take off the attention, from more serious, solid, and important attachments, and pursuits. And so become an inlet, to the worst vanities, that can infest the mind. And this naturally warps men from the ways of truth, and virtue. And as this induceth an indisposition to graver, and more useful pursuits; it also createth a necessity of greater expence: at the same time that it rebateth that spirit of industry, and honest arts, which should support it. And what is the consequence; when this love of vanity hath once taken possession of the soul, it must be indulged, and supported at all hazards.

And

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And as this cannot be done by that industry, and those honest arts which it hath totally driven away; it must be done by evil arts, of some kind or other: and often of all kinds.

The history of *Gehazi* in the vth chapt. of the II^d book of kings, affordeth a fine illustration of those observations now laid down.

What the true principle and source of his guilt was, will best appear from his punishment: which being dictated by the spirit of God; was, beyond all doubt, rightly directed.

When *Naaman* was healed of his leprosy by obeying the directions of the prophet *Elisha*; he returned in gratitude to acknowledge the obligation: and earnestly intreated the prophet, to accept from him some valuable proofs, and tokens of his gratitude. Which the prophet having absolutely refused; nevertheless, his servant thought, that was an occasion to enrich, and adorn himself, which

which was not by any means to be lost. And therefore he resolved at once, to disgrace his master, and in him the religion of his G O D; to violate the truth, and to defraud *Naaman*, rather than leave his own vicious appetites unindulged. Doubtless he deemed the *Syrian* garments proper ornaments to adorn his person: and when that was done, the other conveniencies of life must be adjusted, and suited to them: this consideration made olive-yards, and vineyards, but necessary conveniencies, suited to the other circumstances of his dignity.

The spirit of the prophet attended him, thro' the inmost recesses, and windings of his heart: (which plainly demonstrate it to be the spirit of G O D) saw clearly into his most secret purposes: and immediately suggested a punishment, most admirably accommodated, to all the circumstances of his guilt, he inflicted a
distemper

distemper upon him, which made all those vanities useless at once. *Syrian* ornaments would but ill become a leprous carcass: and would in effect, but make his deformities more conspicuous. And, indulgence of appetite, would but more inflame his incurable disease: which must go down to his posterity, together with his ill acquired inheritance.

Good God! how many unhappy *Gebazis* are there in the world, who trample under foot every duty they owe to God and man, and derive to themselves worse than leprosy, in consequence of their vanities of dress, and unruly indulgence of appetite: and convey the taint (but mostly, without the inheritance) to their posterity.

The love of pomp, and glare of dress, is a false, and fantastic appetite. And all such are gratified with more difficulty: and not only so, but draw after them many other congenial,

genial, and vexatious vanities: leading to enormities of every kind.

Gebazi's guilt was a taint, that had infected his soul: and it was chastised by an infectious disease, that bore an amazing, and a dreadful analogy to it.

O my brethren, sin is to the soul, what the worst diseases are to the body; ulcers, and loathsome corruptions, of every kind. And the disease now inflicted upon *Gebazi*, was at once, a most lively emblem, and dreadful chastisement of it: at once its shocking picture, and punishment. How finely, and how dreadfully instructive, is this history to us; and how strictly, and religiously should we be upon our guard, lest the inward defilements of our sins, should descend like those outward pollutions of *Gebazi*; to our latest posterity? and derive, not only mortal diseases, but immortal miseries upon them.

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That the people of this nation, and this city in particular, are overrun with strong appetites, and unruly vanities, of various kinds, as *Gebazi* was; is a truth equally lamentable and notorious.

This my brethren, this is the true source of those pests, that infect your cities, and infect your highways. This is the true cause, why so many of your sons grow up, not as healthful, but as poisonous plants. *That your daughters grow up, not as the polished corners of your temples, but as the polluted corners of your cities.* This is the true source of that great decay, that leading into captivity, and that complaining in your streets: far beyond the corruption, and calamity, of all former ages.

This is the true reason, why so many of one sex, openly act as if the laws of the gospel were totally reversed to them. Forgetting, or entirely neglecting, to adorn themselves

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with modest apparel, with shamefacedness, and sobriety. But on the contrary glaring in the eyes of the world, with brodered hair, with gold, and pearls, and costly array; and an equal contempt of modesty and sobriety.

This is the true reason, why all those corruptions, which the prophet *Ezekiel* so loudly crieth out against in *Jerusalem*, chap. xxii. xxiii. are now so flagrant, and notorious in this city. Of whose inhabitants (I mean too many of them) we may truly say, as he doth: *in thee have they set light by father, and mother. In the midst of thee, have they dealt by oppression. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales (and we may add all weapons of violence) to shed blood. In the midst of thee they commit lewdness. Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion: and hast forgotten me saith the*

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Lord God. Behold therefore, I have smitten my hand on thy dishonest gain, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee. I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them, whom thou hatest. They shall strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels: and they shall deal with thee hatefully. And shall take away all thy labour: and shall leave thee naked and bare.

It appeareth clearly from the course of *Ezekiel's* prophecy, that the people of *Israel* had been bewitched by the grandeur, gaiety, and gorgeous apparel of the *Chaldeans*: to imitate their luxuries, their vanities, and in the end, even their Idolatries, and abominations of every kind. And after *God*, had, by his prophets, frequently exhorted, admonished, and warned them from those dangerous,

rous, and deceitful imitations, and practices; he at length declareth, that he will totally give them up in the most abject servitude, to the absolute dominion of that nation, whose ways they had so wantonly learned: and whose vanities they had so wantonly, and wickedly enslaved themselves to; in the fulness of their pride and wealth.

The time is too recent to be yet forgotten, and I hope too memorable to be ever wholly forgotten; since our neighbouring nation, and almost natural enemies, whose vanities we so fondly adopt and so idly and destructively imitate, had laid a deep and dangerous scheme to oppress us by a sudden and strong invasion: to oppress us unarmed and unprepared; had not GOD of his infinite, and unmerited mercy, timely, and most wonderfully interposed, for our preservation; by the destruction of their fleet in their own harbour: by the

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destruction of the proud in their own deep waters. Which, if they had not been so destroyed, would in all human probability, have gone over our soul.

Here a question naturally occurs; are we in any degree amended by this deliverance; by this late deliverance added to many former? alas, it is but too true, that we are not. That we are rather become more abandoned in our abominations: infomuch, that we may cry out against this people, as the prophet *Isaiab* did against his own; *ah sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil doers: children that are corruptors; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Israel unto anger; they are gone away backward.*

Why should ye be stricken any more; ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,

From

From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.

My brethren, a natural body in this state, hath rarely any relief, but from caustics, and infitions; from the sharpest, and severest methods of cure. States and communities of men, in the same degree of moral corruption have rarely any relief, but in moral caustics and infitions; in chastisements, and calamities of the severest kinds. These chastisements, the divine justice, and even the divine mercy, call upon him to inflict: and nothing but sincere repentance, and reformation, can avert the vengeance.

My brethren the leprosy of sin can only be cured as *Naaman's* was, by washing: by washing, as *Naaman* did, not once only, but over, and over. By washing seven times: not in the flood of *Jordan*, but in the

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laver of regeneration ; in the stream of pure, and purifying repentance.

If you obey the prophet *Isaiab*, as *Naaman* did the prophet *Elisba*, your pollutions shall certainly be done away, as his were. The prescriptions of both prophets, are exactly the same, differing only in the means. *Elisba* prescribed a natural cleansing in *Jordan*, endued with a miraculous power by that spirit which inspired the prophet. *Isaiab* prescribeth a moral cleansing by repentance, and amendment, endued with a no less miraculous power by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.*

Believe me my brethren, this is the only prescription that can purify guilt : that can avert the deadly, and dreadful consequences of it even in this world : and the infinitely more dreadful, miseries, of the next.

This

This repentance, and this reformation, the only cleansing lenient. Mollifying and healing medicines of moral corruption ; he of his infinite mercy pour into our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake ; our only mediator and redeemer.

This repentance, and this reformation, the only cleansing lenient. Mollifying and healing medicines of moral corruption; he of his infinite mercy pour into our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake; our only mediator and redeemer.

SERMON XIV.

The great Evil and Guilt of Luxury
in Eating and Drinking.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

Rom. Chap. xiii. Ver. 13.

*Let us walk honestly as in the day;
not in rioting and drunkenness, not
in chambering and wantonness, not
in strife and envying.*

BY the *day* in the text, is meant
the glorious light of the go-
spel; by which, the darkness of the
heathen world was dispersed, and
done away; and therefore those vices
and irregularities which men indulg-
ed in the dark, when the shameful-
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ness and filth of their vile practices, were hidden from notice, and from censure, they should now shun, and be ashamed of, in the sunshine of the gospel; when the deformity and indecentcy of such a conduct, could no longer be concealed; could not possibly escape the eye of their own conscience, and the observation and reproach of the whole world around them. *Let us walk honestly,* in the original *ευσχημονως* decently, and gracefully, that is, let us live with the utmost regard to that beauty and becomingness of virtue, which will make the conduct of a good christian, lovely in the eyes of all that behold it, even sons of the night are ashamed to expose their freaks and their follies to the eye of day. How much more should the children of the light fear to sin in the face of the sun. If the light of the day be a natural restraint upon intemperance and excess, much more should the light of the gospel,

gospel. If sots of the night revere the light of the sun, how much more should the children of the day revere the sun of righteousness. How much more should they fly from and be confounded at the sense of those impurities and pollutions, which they cannot possibly indulge, without bidding defiance to every degree of decency, and shame: and doing violence to the tender mercy of God whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us.

Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

And in order to prevail upon you to do so, the business of this discourse shall be, to expose the guilt, the folly, and deformity of luxury, and intemperance in eating and drinking, expressed in the text, by the terms rioting and drunkenness, or

or as it is in the original, *καταβολή* *καταβολή* feasting and sittings. And to this purpose, I shall first shew you what this luxury is; and secondly, I shall endeavour to trace out the evils that attend it.

And in order to find out the true nature of this vice, it is necessary to observe, that whereas food was appointed by Almighty God, for our preservation and support, therefore in order to attain that end more surely, and universally, he hath annexed pain and uneasiness to the want of it, in order to excite men to their own preservation; and likewise placed a good deal of pleasure in the gratification of that want; that so we might enjoy our being, at the same time that we support it; and be allured so to do.

From hence it comes to pass, that some men mistaking the true end of food, which is preservation, have placed it intirely in pleasure, and the

the gratification of appetite; that is in truth, they have mistaken the means for the end, and used them accordingly. Now this is just as weak, as if a sick man should imagine that the virtue of the physic consisted in the gilding and sweetening of the pill, and so should take druggs, not for health, but for pleasure. Now this properly constituteth the idea of luxury: when men forgetting or disregarding the true end of food, place it intirely in the gratification of appetite. And hence it is, that luxury is the great inducement to intemperance: when men eat to satisfy the demands of nature, they are seldom in danger of excess; because the demands of nature; are easily satisfied. But when men eat for pleasure, they eat beyond the demands of nature, and are drawn into all the evils of intemperance. And hence hath proceeded that endless variety of meats, and sauces, contrived with so much labour

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bour and expence, and with such curious adjustments and compositions of taste, as have erected the art of eating, into a science of no mean figure, and esteem in the world: and as it is ordinary with mankind, to run into endless error, when once they forsake the ways of nature and providence, so hath it happened remarkably in this case. And perhaps the human folly never was carried to greater extravagance, than in this article of luxury: witness that mad and incredible profusion we meet with in the lives of the *Roman* emperors; feasts continued for whole nights and days together; and emetics frequently applied to unload the full stomach, and prepare it for new luxury. And all this, to obtain a pleasure, which the exercise of a few hours, in innocent recreation, or useful labour, would purchase for them, in much greater perfection: and save all that rack of invention that hath been employed

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in contriving as well for the expence as poyancy of food *; nor is the folly of this vice more conspicuous on the score of profusion, than it is on account of that infirmity of body and mind consequent to it. For it is beyond all question, that he that eateth to luxury, doth not feed for health; but for disease. For nature delighteth in simplicity, and temperance; and variety of delicious foods oppress the stomach, whilst they please the palate: and consequently, must of necessity, be thrown off, crude, and ill digested into the blood. The body under the weight of too much food, is just in the case of a flower oppressed with rain; that which was intended to administer to its life and beauty, now serveth on-

* As in the example of *Vitelius's* dish made up of the brains of peacocks and pheasants; the tongues of phoenixes, and the melts of lampreys brought from the *Spanish* and *Carpathian* seas. Also that celebrated dish of *Æsop* the tragedian made up of the rarest singing birds and such as best imitated the human voice at six thousand sesterces a piece.

ly to depress and to deface it. Nor is the mind in a better condition than the body; for when the stomach is over charged, the spirits are so intirely employed upon the business of digestion, that the mind is left wholly unattended. And indeed nature is not sufficient for two such demands, at the same time; being unable to bear the double expence, of ministering at once to reason, and to digestion; to reason in its due demands, and to digestion in extravagance. Now all this considered, it is no wonder that luxury hath always been made the mark of a depraved and degenerate age: and that all those that have set up for amending the lives of mankind, and reducing them to the best and most perfect state they were capable of, have always made temperance a fundamental in their regulations. And for the same reason, we are commanded in the scriptures (infinitely
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the wisest the most perfect system of philosophy, that ever was formed) to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. The natural demands of hunger and thirst, are so strong, that they will not fail to call of themselves for a necessary supply of food: and stand in no sort of need of any artificial incitements or provocatives to appetite; and when these are temperately indulged, health is preserved, and both the body and the mind are in a condition to discharge their several functions with vigour. The business of digestion, being quickly over, the animal spirits are intirely at the devotion of the mind. And the student feels no difficulty in his intellectual pursuits, and the man of the world feels no difficulty in application and attention to his business, from the weight of fulness and stupidity of indigestion. The body likewise having taken in no more food, than the

necessities of nature called for, can lay up no supplies either for vices or diseases; and by this means, many of those evils are prevented, to which fulness naturally leadeth, and to which so unactive and sedentary a condition of life as students, citizens, and many men of various occupations, are generally engaged in, would otherwise render them too obnoxious.

It hath been finely observed of intemperate eating, that if it had been appointed as a punishment, he had been reckoned a more than ordinary tyrant that invented it. And yet surely the evils that such a one would bring upon mankind, were light, and inconsiderable, in comparison of those, which mankind bring upon themselves, by luxury of food: for the pain, of forced fulness would quickly be over, either from nature's refusing to bear the burden any longer, or from artificial reliefs; whereas

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whereas the ill effects of luxury, increase with our years, and for the most part continue with our lives. So that the difference is here: the tyrant might torment you, for a little time, with forced fulness; whereas luxury tempteth you to torment yourselves, for the best part of your lives.

Again, as temperance enableth both the body and mind to discharge their several offices with ease and satisfaction, so also doth it help to redeem a considerable portion of our time, for that discharge. Sleep is the natural relief of toil, and weariness. That is, when the animal spirits are exhausted by the labours of the day, men naturally fall into that state of rest, and insensibility, which we call sleep; that during that season, the body may have a sufficient recruit of spirits, for the labours of the ensuing day. But when the weight of fulness, and indigestion, are added

to the other labours of life; and a man goeth to bed, not only to recover his wasted spirits, but to get rid of an incumbered brain, and a loaded stomach; it is evident the business of sleep is doubled. And a man must of necessity rest much longer, than he otherwise should need to do. And this is the only natural, and true way of accounting for some mens invincible sluggishness, and that strange difficulty that is found in forcing them to the early duties of life: especially in their younger years; when their spirits abound; and consequently, the waste is easier recruited*.

What I have here observed concerning luxury of food, I would have understood as well of luxury in drinks,

** This added when preached in the college.*

I wish some that hear me, would reflect a little upon this truth; and remember, that their neglects of this kind, will not only conclude them under the censure of sloth and idleness, but also of gluttony, and intemperance.

as in meats; because, that, is at least equally pernicious. And since all drinking as well as eating for pleasure, abstracted from the demands and ends of nature, the support of health, and strength, the enjoyment of social, temperate, and innocent festivity, and the necessary relief of care: I say all eating and drinking, abstracted from these ends, properly constitute the idea of luxury; and are at the same time the vices of drunkenness, and intemperance. Therefore I shall consider this kind of drinking, in the remaining part of this discourse, under that head.

And indeed intemperate drinking is the most dangerous of all vices you can possibly fall into: and for this plain reason, because that by this you are put into the power of every other vice. So that we may say of this, as of the evil spirit in the gospel, it is not a single vice, but it is *legion*.

And hence it is, that when the apostle exhorteth us, to *walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness*. He immediately addeth, *not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying*. These vices being the natural effects of luxury, and intemperance; by which the blood is inflamed, the head disturbed, and the heart perverted: and men become a prey to every temptation, and every folly in life. And as this is true of mankind in every period, it is more remarkably so in youth. For although sottishness be more shameful and indecent in old age, it is more dangerous, and pernicious in youth: and for this plain reason, youth is itself a drunkness. That is, there is a giddiness and a fervour that attend it, apt enough of themselves to throw you into too many extravagancies: and God knows there is no need of any artificial or additional inflammation to
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your blood, at that period. You are already from the condition of your constitution, at that period, too much in the power of your passions. And it is by no means your interest to inflame them to boundless sway: but quite otherwise, to restrain them by the united force of reason, and abstinence *.

The business of reason, and religion, of education, and discipline, is to calm, and cool the passions. The business of riot and drunkenness, is to inflame, and boil them up to tenfold extravagance. Hence all that variety of wild and irrational pursuits, and projects, which at once

* *This added when preached at the college.*

I never consider the condition of youth in this point but it brings into my mind *Virgil's* noble image of *Eolus* in the midst of so many furious winds, tearing and roaring unruly about him, whilst he with all the arts of a wise and resolute governor, binds and chains down some, at the same time that he tempers and softens others, which if he did not. (saith the poet) they would confound heaven and earth. *Quod ni faciat maria acerras cælumque profundum. Quippe ferant rapidi secum, verrantque per auras,*

depress,

depress, and dishonour our nature, mad mirth, senseless, and sottish fondness, causeless quarrels, vain and wicked vaunts, open and avowed licentiousness, and an utter defiance of God and goodness.

Solomon hath summed up the train of extravagance, and evil adventures, such men run thro', in the course of a drunken revel, with admirable beauty, and great exactness, in the *xxiiiid* chapter of his *Proverbs*, 29th and following verses, *Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine.* It is in the original they that seek *mixture*: that is they who mingle drinks of several sorts, to render them, at once, more alluring, and more intoxicating: he then addeth that excellent advice to his son. *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour*

tour in the cup. When it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. And then followeth a greater evil and infatuation than all the rest. When shall I awake, I shall seek it yet again; notwithstanding all the dangers the sot ran through, and the indignities he endured, in his riot; yet no sooner doth he awake, but he runneth the same round of folly and extravagance over again. The drunkard is emphatically the fool in the Proverbs, who returneth to his folly as the dog to his vomit. He hath no sooner slept off; or heaved off one surfeit, but he swalloweth down another.

Again

Again he beholdeth strange women, and again he uttereth perverse things; until he end in fevers, or phrenzies; or fall a sacrifice to a freak, or die by the sword of his dearest companion; murdering perhaps, and murdered at once: and goeth down quick to perdition; where only he can meet with greater monsters, and more abandoned reprobates than those he left behind him: whose conversation he is now best fitted for, by a long course of impiety, and profaneness; and the worst abuse of the patience and long-suffering of Almighty God.

The business of reason and religion (as I before observed) is to improve and perfect our nature to raise it to its original excellency! to fit us for the conversation of angels, and and arch-angels, and the spirits of good men made perfect. But the business of riot and intemperance, is to sink us gradually into destruction; to debase and to deprave, to debase

us into brutes, and to deprave us into fiends. To fit us for the society of hell.

Orpheus torn to pieces by *Bacchanals*, is a fine emblem of the ruin of every thing that is good and amiable by riot and excess. Every passion inflamed by wine, is a mad *Bacchanal*, at mortal enmity with art and elegance, and the harmony of the mind. Every ornament and accomplishment of the soul must one day fall before it, must one day fall by the fate of *Orpheus*, and perish piecemeal. And to crown all, besides the ill consequences that drunkenness hath in common with other evil habits, it hath this dreadful effect peculiar to itself; that a long habit in this vice, may make it at last, necessary. Nor can those who have long indulged it, ordinarily live without it. And what a dreadful reflection is it, to think, that we have lived so in the world,

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as to make our vices necessary to our very being.

I will add one observation more: and that is, that it is the vice of all others that doth the greatest dishonour to human nature. We think it argument enough against other vices that they debase us to brutes; but this doth more; it putteth us vastly beneath them. And a swine wallowing in the mire, is not half so hateful, nay not half so beastly a sight, as a drunkard in his own excesses.

It was a practice with the *Spartans*, to expose their slaves, drunk, to the sight of the ingenuous youth, to deter them from so shameful a vice, by so sad an example: and no doubt nothing could strike the mind with abhorrence of such a brutal practice, like such a sight: but still methinks it was too great an indignity to be put even upon the *Helotæ*;
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upon the lowest and meanest rank of human slaves! nay it were, beyond all question, an indignity even upon a brute of a better species: and if so, how scandalous must this practice be, how shameful beyond all reproach, in men! in creatures that value themselves upon the use of reason, and the advantages of religion.

I have omitted in this discourse, or rather, have not insisted upon, some of the common topics against drunkenness, and indeed I hope the stupidity, the infamy, the brutality of this vice, added to the inflammation and outrage of every passion occasioned by it, and being thrown into the power of every other vice, when it is in possession of you, will be abundantly sufficient to dissuade and deter you from the practice of it.

I cannot conclude upon this subject, without admonishing my hearers, that of all the various sorts of sottishness, that of going early to the

wine, is surely the greatest, and the most unpardonable. The pretence of this practice, is drinking to get an appetite; but the true purpose of it, is drinking to destroy it. And is doubtless one of the most pernicious practices that ever obtained among mankind. Other fots redeem some portion of their time to their duty, but morning drunkards sacrifice the whole. Here intemperance subdueth by surprize; and maketh speedy progress from one degree to another; till riot succeed to excess; and every folly and every vice succeed to riot. Till fottishness subdue itself, and stupidity is oppressed by sleep. Thus, time, health, and fortune, are wasted at once; and industry, wealth, and virtue give way to sloth, and poverty, and all the infinite evils that await them.

Give me leave to add one short reflection to what hath been said, and so conclude.

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The festival of our blessed Saviour's nativity hath succeeded in the same season of the year, with the antient *Saturnalia* an heathen feast, instituted in memory of the golden age, which flourished as they deemed under the reign of *Saturn*; when all mankind lived in freedom, and ease, and plenty: and the distinctions of bond and free, of tyrant and slave, were unknown. In this season, masters forgot their tyranny; and servants threw off their chains: and an image of the original ease, festivity, and freedom, was exhibited to the world. When christianity was established in the place of heathenism, it quickly came to be understood, that true liberty was now restored with it. That mankind were now redeemed from the slavery of sin, and satan; and restored to the original freedom of the sons of God. From hence, they quickly came to be considered, upon the

foot of their natural relation, and original equality : *that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, or Scythian, bond or free; but a new creature.*

Those who were before aliens, and enemies, now became brethren ; sons of the same first parents ; servants of the same God, and heirs of the same salvation. In this way of thinking, tyrants threw down their scourges, and slaves shook off their chains. The consequence of which, was, ease, and equanimity among the lower part of mankind : condescension, humanity, beneficence, and charity among the higher ; and love, joy, innocent festivity, and freedom among all. How blessed a scene was this, and how noble a picture of the original simplicity, felicity, and equality, was exhibited to the earth.

This was the festival of *Christmas* in its original institution : then were

the house, the board, the arms, and the heart open to the stranger, the friendless, the fatherless, and the widow: and the poor tenant was welcomed, and levelled with his lord. Alas these happy times are now vanished: the great æra of the christian redemption, is now remembered in nothing, but the name. That spirit of irreligion which is gone out into the world, together with its vile and genuine offspring, the sordid selfish, insatiable spirit of avarice and private luxury, have either devoured, or driven away, the generous, and the God-like spirit of public hospitality, attended with innocent and social mirth. Or if there be yet any remains of the antient and hospitable festivity, they are for the most part, such only, as are seen in the revels of those who as *St. Peter* expresseth it, take pleasure to riot in the day time, spots they are and blemishes in these feasts of love: and bring re-

proach and infamy upon this sacred and solemn festival. Having eyes full of adultery, beguiling unstable souls, alluring through the lusts of the flesh. Through much wantonness those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption. These are they upon whom the woes and vengeance of God are justly, and peculiarly denounced in the sacred writings. Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil (saith the prophet) woe unto them that are mighty to drink strong drink, that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night till wine inflame them. And the harp and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands. Therefore hell hath enlarged itself, and opened her mouth

mouth without measure, and their glory and their multitude and their pomp and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it. Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment, for time mispent, and for talents misapplied; for health impaired, and life cut short; for the ends of infinite wisdom defeated, and inverted: for the best blessings of life converted into a curse; either cruelly withheld from all the duties and delights of charity, or more cruelly wasted in licentiousness, for the propagation of evil principles, and the infection of evil example; in one word, for the best gifts of GOD, either diverted from their true ends, or abused to the worst. For all these things God will bring thee into judgment. His just vengeance will await thee in this world, and pursue thee into the

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next: *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* From this dreadful doom, and unutterable woe, God of his infinite mercy deliver us all thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

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SERMON XV.

The true Nature and great Importance of the Christian Virtue of Contentment.

Philip. iv. Part of 11th Verse.

For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

MY brethren this is a lesson well worth learning. And indeed is of the last importance to be learned, and practised, in perfection. Forasmuch as nothing less, than the happiness of your whole lives depends upon it. And that you may learn it with more ease, and attention; I shall endeavour in the first place, to explain the true na-

ture, and character of contentment. And when I have done so, I shall lay before you, as well as I can, the best, and wisest motives to it. Together, with the infinite advantages, that attend it. To begin then :

Contentment is that christian virtue, which disposeth the mind of man to acquiesce, and be satisfied with his present condition of life, whatever it be ; and to make the best of it : and it is the virtue, which, of all others, is by much the most necessary to our well-being in this world. All other virtues have indeed a tendency to make us good ; but content is in a peculiar manner calculated to make us happy ? it is a virtue designed by God, to supply the deficiency and imperfection of things here below ; and their inability to constitute our happiness. For since it hath pleased the Almighty, so to order the affairs of this world, that nothing here is able to afford us
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solid and plenary satisfaction; he, of his great wisdom, hath so ordained, that one virtue should fill up the place of all the enjoyments that are wanting to us, that man should, as it were, be sufficient to his own felicity. At least, that he should be independent of the things without him to constitute it. And this exactly answers to the expression here used by St. *Paul*; *εμαυτον εν οἷς εἰμι αυταρκης ειναι*; I have learnt in whatsoever state I am to be sufficient to myself. The word which we render content, signifying in the original self-sufficient. As if the apostle had told us, that he had learnt to take off his dependence from the things without him; and place his happiness wholly in the temper and conduct of his own mind.

But then this must by no means be so understood, as if *GOD* were excluded. For when the apostle speaks

speaks of our being sufficient to our own happiness, the expression must always be understood in the same sense in which he useth it in the 2d epist. *Cor.* iiii chapt. 5th ver. *not that we are sufficient of ourselves to do any thing, as of ourselves but our sufficiency is of God.* And so likewise when we suppose happiness to consist in the temper and conduct of our own minds, we must mean such minds as the apostle was blessed with: such minds as are embued with the precepts, and supported by the prospects of religion. Such minds, as have taken off their dependence from the things without them (which are uncertain, and unsatisfying) and placed it wholly, upon GOD, the fountain of all happiness! *in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of change. And with whom there is fulness of joy.*

For the considerations of true religion are essential, are absolutely necessary

necessary to contentment. And that they are so, is evident.

First, From the imperfect condition of this virtue in the heathen world.

And secondly, Because the best and most powerful arguments for content are taken from the providence, wisdom, and goodness of God, and from the rewards of a future life.

As to the imperfect condition of this virtue in the heathen world ; it is evident, that they, being almost wholly ignorant of the providence of God, and the future rewards of virtue ; could have no assurance of the good things of this life : and consequently, no peace in the enjoyment of them. Nor could they have any support in calamity, but the necessity of bearing it : since it proceeded, (upon their principles) either from an unavoidable chance, or an overruling fate, that could not be resisted : and this was so far from being

ing a relief to their afflictions, that it was rather an aggravation of them. For what can possibly heighten any misfortune more; than our being under an unavoidable necessity of bearing it; without any sure prospect of relief under it, or reward after it? Indeed some of the wiser heathen saw the necessity of flying to the providence of God in this exigence. From hence it was, that, comparing this world to a theatre, they likened the race of men in it, to actors upon a stage: that had their several parts assigned them by the master of the drama. And therefore as to the variety of conditions in this life, they said it signified nothing, whether a man acted a beggar, or a prince. All that he should be concerned for, was, whether he rightly performed the part that was assigned him.

Others again argued, that no evil could possibly befall a good man. And that a good man struggling with
adverse

adverse fortune, was a conflict worthy the gods to behold! and these indeed were pompous and fine speculations: and contained a great deal of truth in them. But still, what solid support in affliction; or what sure reward of a painful pursuit of virtue? this was a discovery, reserved for a greater than either *Epicletus*, or *Seneca*, or *Socrates*. Namely for him who *brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*.

And therefore in discoursing upon the words of my text, as I shall endeavour to lay before you the several arguments and encouragements to this virtue of contentment; from reason, and the establishment of things here below; so I shall principally insist upon those, that are drawn from the doctrines of the *christian* religion.

First then, since our blessed Saviour hath assured us of the providence of God perpetually watching
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over all his works; directing and disposing the issues and events of all things both in heaven and earth; in the wisest way, and to the best purposes; and this in so exact and particular a manner, that *the very hairs of our head are numbered*; (as he expressly assureth us) and that not so much as a *sparrow falls to the ground* without the divine permission; (*i. e.*) that the least, and most inconsiderable events, are not unheeded by GOD. From hence may be drawn the most powerful argument in the world for contentment, and acquiescence. For since all things that can possibly befall us in this world, are by the divine permission and appointment; since the great ruler of the world is all wise, to know, and direct what is most proper, and convenient for us; and of infinite power, as well as goodness, to determine and to execute according to that knowledge; from hence it necessarily followeth,

loweth, that all the events that happen to us, otherwise than by our own fault; are the very best that could happen: since they are all the effects of infinite goodness, and unerring wisdom. And one would think, that this one consideration should be in the place of ten thousand arguments for contentment: and indeed it would be so, if the corruption and vanity of mankind, did not make it necessary to us, to shew, not only in the general, but also in the several particular instances of God's providence, that he is wiser, and better than we; and provideth better for us, than we could possibly do for ourselves. And therefore it will be necessary to descend to particular instances; to evince the folly and iniquity of repining, and discontent, in all conditions and circumstances of life.

And in order to do this, give me leave to observe first, that the general

neral causes of discontent in the world, are not real, but comparative. That is, men, generally speaking, are not so much uneasy, because their condition is really bad; as because their neighbour's condition is better than theirs: and since their neighbour, as they think, hath not more, perhaps not so much merit; they think it hard that he should be better dealt by. And therefore they are discontented, and repine at the unequal distributions of providence.

Now in answer to this complaint, give me leave to observe, first, that an inequality of conditions is absolutely necessary to the government and preservation of the world. For if no man were richer, or more powerful than another; who should rule, or who would obey? who would serve, or who could command? and what would be the unavoidable consequence of such a state, but anarchy, and ruin? and therefore tho' the

the merits of all men were equal, yet is it absolutely necessary, that there should be some distinction in their conditions. So that if I am not wiser than he that governs the world, and of more importance than the order and well being of it; the inequality of my condition to my neighbours, will be no just cause of complaining, and discontent to me.

But perhaps you have more merit than he.

Who is best judge of that, God or you? and there is at least this presumption against you, that by the wise appointment of divine providence, the merits of men, are (generally speaking) nearly proportioned to their several conditions, and stations of life, though there may be, and are (for very wise reasons) particular instances to the contrary.

But suppose you really have more merit; yet still may it not reasonably be asked, whence you had it? was

it not derived from Almighty God? where then is the gratitude, or justice of your repining? because God hath given you the advantage over your neighbour in one respect, therefore he hath dealt hard by you, that he did not give you the advantage over him in all respects. This surely is strange reasoning! ought you not rather to be infinitely grateful to God, for the advantages he hath bestowed; and humbly submit it to his wisdom, and goodness, why he bestowed no more upon you. Probably, nay most certainly, he did this in mercy to you, your own vices, or the vices of others would have undone you, in a better station. You had long since fallen a sacrifice to your own vanity, or the envy and avarice of others, an higher condition would perhaps have turned your brain, you had grown giddy with your height, pride, and ambition would have dazzled your eyes, and blinded your reason,

reason, and perverted you to your utter ruin. You pray daily and devoutly to God that he would not lead you into temptation, and yet you repine that he hath not given you power and honour and wealth which are the greatest and most dangerous temptations in the world.

Again we ought to consider that how unequal soever our conditions are in this life, yet the blessings of life are not at all so unequal; (*i. e.*) though men are not equally rich, nor wise, nor honourable, yet they are pretty near equally happy. And for proof of this, let me ask every man that hears me, what man in the world is it that he could wish to change conditions with in all respects? there is no one of us but would gladly wish for one man's health or wit or humour; the learning of another, the wealth or virtue of a third, and so on; but where is that man you would change with

in all respects? begin from the greatest prince in the world and go down to the lowest of your acquaintance. Examine your own hearts carefully, and you will find that there is scarce one man upon earth that you would change conditions with in every particular: and if there be not, then consider that the necessary consequence from this must be. That every man living is the happiest man in the world. And consequently that no man hath, or can have just reason to repine or be discontented with his condition.

Why then, may it reasonably be asked, why are we ever uneasy, and think ourselves in a worse condition than our neighbours?

Why? because we are fools: and take wrong estimates of things. We should remember that there is no state of life but what hath advantages, and disadvantages, peculiar to itself. Our folly is, that when we wish

with for a change of our condition, we consider nothing in our own state of life, but the disadvantages that attend it; which give us uneasiness, and make us desirous to quit it: and in our neighbour's condition, we consider nothing but the advantages it hath over ours; which make us desirous to exchange our own for it. Whereas if we rightly considered the disadvantages and inconveniencies of that state we wished for, as well as of that which we are in; we should in all probability, sit down quiet and contented.

All conditions of life have something in them very like those inventions in perspective: where you see many broken figures disposed in such a manner, that look at them from one point, you see a king in his robes; look at them from another, you see a beggar in his rags! it is just so in life. Every condition hath some point of view, from which

it appeareth good, and happy and desirable: change but your situation, and it is the very reverse of all this, painful, and frightful, and forbidding. Thus for example,

They that are oppressed with the cares of marriage, are very apt to envy the free, and as they think it, undisquieted condition of such as live single. On the other hand, they that live single, are very apt to envy the advantages they see others enjoy in a marriage state. The plenty arising from two fortunes united. The credit and power from increased alliances. The pleasure of offspring. And above all, the felicity of enjoying the society of the person, perhaps in the whole world, most agreeable to them.

Now supposing all these advantages awaited wedlock in the common course of things; as it is certain they do not: yet a thinking man may be apt sometimes, to imagine
some

some disadvantages in that state, more than sufficient to balance the blessings above-mentioned: when he reflects, what it is to be perpetually tied to the humour, or subject to the will of another person; in the present fallen condition of mankind. At the same time, that a reasonable freedom is the surest foundation of happiness in this world. When he reflects, what it is, to have the cares of life greatly increased upon him. To be distracted, perhaps with just, or even groundless jealousy be given up to incessant vexation, for want of issue: or endless anxiety for them. To be under perpetual alarms, for their life, their health, their vices, their virtues, their success or disappointment in their several pursuits. Their miscarriages, miseries, and felicities of every kind.

Take marriage then in the light of being supplied with some advantages not to be attained in a single

state; there it is doubtless desirable. Take it in the light of all the anxieties that ordinarily attend it; and there it may be but too forbidding. And yet with all these inconveniences, every man in his senses must find it infinitely preferable, to any degree of indulgence in unlawful pursuits.

Again, the poor that live by the sweat of their brow, that earn a mean livelihood by hard labour, that lie hard, and are coarsely clad; are very apt to repine and envy their rich neighbours, who are *cleathed in purple, and fare sumptuously every day*. And why? because they consider nothing but the sunny side of the wealthy condition. Whereas, if the circumstances of both were strictly scanned; the poor would perhaps be found, upon the comparison, much the happier of the two. He hath not indeed such variety of costly food: no, nor in consequence of that,

that, such variety of diseases: but then he hath that which alone can give the best food in the world all its relish; a good appetite, and a good digestion: and these perhaps the other wants. He hath not so much leisure, or in other words, so many idle hours, that hang heavy upon him. But then he hath probably more health from his industry; which is infinitely a greater blessing. His bed is not perhaps so soft, but then his sleep is much sweeter, and sounder. He hath not so much wealth, but then he enjoyeth what he hath, and covetousness cannot make it useless to him. He hath not so much power, no, nor the attendant of it, ambition: that makes all the power he hath insignificant to any other purpose than the attainment of more.

In a word, Almighty God, hath in the established order and appointments of his providence, made ample, abundant provision, for the
well

well being of all his creatures. He hath furnished us with enjoyments, and delights, that are plain, simple, and easy to be attained, by all orders, and degrees of men. And these are they which constitute our greatest natural happiness. But pride, and vanity have invented, at least have pretended to invent, delights, that are out of nature. Enjoyments that are fantastick, perplexed, uncertain, and never to be satisfied. And such are all the pursuits of ambition, and avarice. Two restless principles, that no sooner come up to their wishes, but they bound away beyond them: and run a giddy race, that hath no end.

But that the pleasures of nature are infinitely preferable, is evident, from the eagerness, and sensibility, with which, men return to them, at the last. For after they have wearied themselves with a wild pursuit, of false, and delusive delights,
they

they are glad in the end, to return to those, which they before rejected, because they were cheap, plain, and easy. And which, now, for that very reason, they find to be alone natural, and true.

For proof of this, besides the examples of some few great spirits, that had courage enough to resign great empires, and renounce the false pleasures of power, and ambition; I say, besides the proof of these examples, let it be remembered, that it hath ever been the practice of the greatest princes in the world, when they would enjoy themselves, to purpose; to lay aside all the circumstances, and badges of their state: all their pomp, and pageantry: all their ambition, and power, and pre-eminence: and reduce, themselves, as much as possible, to the condition of private men; so to be qualified for the enjoyment of those satisfactions, that are alone natural, and true.

true. Nay the enjoyment of such satisfactions, has oftentimes been the very end of all the ambitious aims, and pursuits, of some of the greatest men in the world. Witness *Pyrrhus's* confession to his friend *Cineas*, so well known from *Plutarch*.

But here it may be urged, that although content be not the natural effect of ambition, and power, yet is it the natural effect of plenty and abundance, in a private fortune. And therefore, although a poor man may have no reason to envy his prince, yet he may have reason to envy his wealthy neighbour.

In answer to this objection, tho' it may justly be affirmed, that contentment is not the effect either of plenty or poverty; but of reason, and religion, in every condition; yet I shall beg leave to take a more exact view of both these states: poverty, and wealth. And compare the happiness of each.

First

First then, as to wealth; besides the covetousness that too often attends it; and forbids the enjoyment of it; the care and toil of acquiring it are often known to exhaust our best years. And when it is acquired, the danger, and fear of losing it, are often known to rob the owner of all the real advantages that accrue from an enlarged fortune. And to make him miserable in the midst of his abundance.

Add to all this, that a state of plenty, and prosperity, is for the most part, a nice, and squeamish condition. Every little thing disgusts it; and very few things can please it. A full fortune being in this respect, like a full stomach; the least thing in the world offends it: at the same time that perhaps no one thing can be thought of, that is able to please it. And I would ask what condition of life can be attended with any circumstance of more unhappiness than

than this? to be easily disgusted; and gratified with difficulty? and yet nothing is more plain, than that a rich man is scarcely capable of any accession of new, and real happiness, from his abundance: other than the pleasure of doing good with it: as being already supplied, with all the necessities, and conveniencies of life. And the necessities, and conveniencies of life, upon which our happiness depends; are within the reach of a very moderate fortune. And abundance is altogether unnecessary, to the attainment of them. Or if great riches fit us for more circumstances of happiness, than fall to the lot of other men; yet these (as far as they center in ourselves) will be found upon inquiry, to be rather imaginary, and fantastical, than real, and solid enjoyments. The utmost they can do for their selfish owner, is, to procure him some new place, or preferment; or purchase, which he did
not

not want. Or some expensive pleasure, which it were better he had wanted. Now it is plain, there can be no real, or solid satisfaction, in these things. For ask all the wise men in the world, what our great and real pleasures consist in, they will tell you, that in the main they are little more, than reliefs from real evils, and gratifications of real wants. And these reliefs and gratifications, are within the reach even of poverty, nay riches are so far from bringing any new accession of happiness to us; upon either of these scores; that in truth they often impair it upon both. First, by bringing new accessions of real evil. And secondly, by preventing, and satiating the great demands of nature, and not only so, but likewise by introducing false appetites, and fantastic pursuits, that are not to be satisfied. 'Tis plain then, the rich man is not capable of any accession of new, and real happiness, from his abundance: except in the single instance,

instance, of being able to do more good in the world, but then the felicity arising from such power, depends intirely upon the virtue, and wisdom of the owner. For as *Socrates* finely observeth, the wealth of a fool is like the weapons of a coward; which he carrieth against himself. The same wealth which is the natural means of preservation in the hands of wisdom; may as easily become the instrument of destruction; in the hands of weakness. Wealth wisely employed, is indeed a noble foundation, and pledge of felicity; but as that is very rarely the case; it is much to be feared, (considering the folly, and iniquity of the world;) that riches are for the most part, rather a curse, than a blessing.

Now the condition of poverty, is plainly the reverse of all this. Almost every thing is able to add, to the poor man's happiness. A kind word, a good meal, a small gift, a little gain,

gain, the least good success of his honest industry; all these are new fountains, of delight to him.

What then is poverty, but to want superfluities; and to be supplied with all the great, and necessary demands of nature. For it is one poor man in ten thousand, that wants these. (Except where want is made the punishment of sloth, or other vices.) What is it but to be freed from the great incitements to luxury and intemperance; to pride, and avarice; and ambition? which are the great plagues of life! what is it, but to feed upon the plainest, and simplest fare; that is, upon the best fare in the world, for the plainest, and simplest fare is always the best. What is it, but to be obliged to work, and be industrious: that is, to be healthful, and vigorous?

To all this may be added, that the greater any man's fortune is, the more he hath to provide, and to ac-

count for. The more care, and toil, and trouble, and disappointment attend him. What then is poverty, but to be obliged to take care and to be accountable for a few things, and to be obnoxious to less trouble, and disquiet, and disappointment.

Upon the whole, what is it to be wealthy for the most part but to be full and satiated, and squeamish! to be incapable of any new accession of pleasure, from our abundance? to be slaves to pride, and avarice, and ambition! to be subject to a thousand temptations, and to ten thousand dangers, and disquiets, and disappointments. And what is poverty, but to be freed from these dangers and disappointments? from these temptations and disquiets? to be freed from many distempers, both of soul, and body. From the great incitements to pride, and luxury, and intemperance. To be health-
ful,

ful, and vigorous, and industrious. To be blest with a good appetite and sound rest. And to be capable of new accessions of happiness from every thing that is good, and desirable in life.

Why then, may some say, if poverty hath so many great, and signal advantages: why is it not chosen? I answer, that although in these respects, it hath the advantage; yet in others riches are greatly preferable.

First, as they are the reward of virtue and good abilities. For, however some men stupid, and ignorant enough, hasten to be rich; and arrive accidentally, or indirectly at great abundance; yet is it beyond all doubt, that honesty, and diligence, added to good abilities; are the surest means to become wealthy. And therefore, riches are on this account, greatly preferable. And we are urged to the attainment of them, by that strong desire of pre-eminence, and
C c 2 superiority;

superiority; wisely impressed upon us, by Almighty God: inasmuch as it is a spur upon all our faculties, to exert themselves with vigour, in every useful pursuit; without which, our industry would stagnate; and our best abilities be of little use.

But riches are yet more desirable, as they enable us to do much more good in the world. For in this respect, they have something great, and god-like in them. And such as renders them greatly desirable, to a charitable, and beneficent mind. But alas, how few are they that are wise, or virtuous enough; either to wish for them upon this account; or to employ them to this purpose? and do not rather grasp after them to indulge that pride, and vanity of our nature; which so strongly urge us, to the pursuit of power, and pre-eminence; and to the gratification of our appetites, and passions, in all their demands? and yet on the other hand,

hand, it is not to be denied, that there are many great, and singular advantages, peculiar to poverty. It is also evident, that there can be nothing very bad in it; since it is that state, which hath ever been borne with the greatest chearfulness and contentment. Since it is that state, which very many of the wisest men in the whole world, have voluntarily embraced. Since it is that state, which is allotted by the divine wisdom to much the greater part of mankind in this world, and some of those, the very best in the world; since it is that state, which God himself in many places of the scriptures, declareth a peculiar regard for, which the son of God hath pronounced a blessing upon; and which he himself honoured with his choice.

And after all this, can any man in his senses account this a bad state: or be reasonably discontented with it.

And thus much, for the comparative causes of discontent. I should now proceed to consider, those causes of discontent, that are real evils: and such are sickness, crosses, disappointments, loss of reputation, death of friends, &c.

But this and what remains, I must defer to another opportunity,

SERMON XVI.

The true Nature and great Importance of the Christian Virtue of Contentment further considered.

Philip. iv. Part of 11th Verse.

For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

IN a former discourse upon these words, I endeavoured to persuade you to contentment; by arguments drawn from the power, providence, wisdom, and goodness of God: which must dispose every thing for the best. From the present state of the world, which makes an inequality of conditions absolutely necessary, to the government, and well-

being of it, from the great blessings, and advantages, peculiar to every state of life. And lastly, from this consideration, that the evils we complain of, are, for the most part, rather comparative, than real.

I proceed now, to consider the several arguments for contentment, under those evils that are real; and such are, sickness, crosses, disappointments, loss of reputation, defamation, and death of friends.

Now in order to support us under these, and the like misfortunes; let us remember, first, that this world, was never designed by God, for a place of perfect happiness; that *we have here no abiding city*: that this is the howling wilderness, through which, we are obliged to pass, in our way to the land of promise, That *we are strangers, and sojourners here on earth*; and therefore, are to make no great account of our condition here, which is short, and

tran-

transient. All that we are to be truly concerned for, is, *that we pass thro' these things that are temporal, that we finally lose not the things that are eternal.*

This was never intended by God, to be a region of rest, since the fall: and therefore it is, that he hath blended disquiet, and disappointment, with all states, and conditions of life; that we should not be tempted, by a course of too much tranquillity, to fix our hopes and our happiness here. Our very bodies are so formed, that an alloy of misery, is perhaps necessary to our very being in this world. Pure and unmixed happiness, is too refined for our faculties, and organs. Is too exalted for mortality! and an uninterrupted continuance of it, would be as fatal to us, as pain. And therefore it is, that all our enjoyments here, are mixed and imperfect. Perfect joy, and felicity, being,

ing, the noblest, the most transcendent prerogative, of a life of glory.

Again we ought to consider, that this life is a state of probation; that GOD Almighty proves us with afflictions here, that he may reward us with immortality hereafter. And we know, it is the doctrine of reason, as well as religion, that the more virtues we have exercised upon earth, the more happiness we shall be intitled to in heaven. Whereas then there are several virtues, which men in a prosperous condition, have no opportunity of exercising; such as patience, resignation, and contentment; therefore it is, that GOD, of his great mercy, oftentimes reverseth a good man's condition; and throws him down from the height of happiness, and affluence, that he may prove him by affliction, and want. And after the example of the great captain of his salvation, *make him perfect by sufferings.*

Again,

Again, thirdly, when we are in affliction, we ought to remember, that GOD always chastiseth his creatures out of the greatest love and good-will to them. To check us in our wicked course: or to hinder us from entering upon it. To awaken us into repentance, and amendment. To force us from our dependence upon earthly things: from our too great confidence, and acquiescence in them. To fix all our hopes, and our happiness upon GOD, their only true center and source. Upon GOD our only sure relief, and refuge! who alone can supply all our wants, remove all our distresses, and crown all our desires.

If therefore you are good christians, and have your minds rightly prepared with these considerations; the knowledge of your own condition, and the infinite wisdom and goodness of Almighty GOD; you will have a sure fund of joy, and consolation,

consolation, under all the afflictions, and calamities of life.

For example, are you grieved with sickness? consider, this evil is brought upon you, either in prevention of some greater evil, or in punishment of guilt: and either way, is a signal mercy from G O D. Of this be fully assured, that G O D delighteth not in the calamity of his creatures; and therefore all his chastisements must be the effects of infinite goodness, and unerring wisdom. Reflect, if your sickness be violent, it cannot last long: but must quickly end, either in health, or death. And death, to a good man, is nothing but a translation from a wicked, and vexatious world, into the regions of immortality, and bliss! and therefore, if you have lived well, you have no reason to repine, at short and transient pains, that must soon end, in everlasting and inconceivable happiness. But if your sickness be not violent,

violent, then can it not be very grievous. And you should then consider it, as a gentle, and gracious method, made use of by Almighty God, to wean you from this world, and its vanities: to undo those strong attachments, and untie those *cords of a man*, that bind you to the earth: to make you by degrees, weary of this world, and its allurements. And in consequence of that, to raise your thoughts, and wishes to a better world: where only, there is *fulnes of joy*; enjoyment without satiety, or remorse: and happiness, without alloy. Or perhaps your complaints, after all, are no more, than the common effects of a bad constitution: and a bad constitution is, oftentimes, to be regarded, as a great blessing from God; forasmuch as it is the best preservative in the world, from a thousand dangers, and temptations, which, health, and vigour are too apt to throw us into. And therefore,

fore, in this case, you should consider your sickness, as in truth it is, the guardian of your virtue: the guardian of your virtue in this world, and the security of your happiness in heaven.

Again, are you in contempt and disgrace with the world? reflect, seriously, and impartially, upon your conduct. Have you done any thing to deserve it? if you have, you suffer the just reward of your folly, and iniquity. And therefore, amend those errors, and forsake those follies, which have drawn this evil upon you. And be thankful to Almighty God, that he hath made use of the contempt and censure of the world, to check you in your course: and bring you, to a right sense of your vanity, and extravagance.

But what if you have not deserved this disesteem, and obloquy, that are fallen upon you? why then, be comforted in your innocence. And be assured, that innocence is the greatest,

greatest, and truest consolation in this world.

There is a remarkable passage to this purpose, in the life of *Socrates*. When he was most unjustly condemned to death, by the *Athenians*. One of his friends, lamenting the injury, cried out, (in the bitterness of his grief,) that nothing troubled him so much, as that he should die so unjustly. That he should suffer innocent. To which, *Socrates* calmly answered. *My friend, and woudest thou rather I had suffered guilty?* that consideration which was his friends affliction, was *Socrates's* greatest consolation. He well knew it was infinitely more desirable to suffer with innocence, than to triumph in iniquity.

And indeed that consolation of *Socrates's*, should be the consolation of every good man in calamity, that they suffer innocent. And why should we expect to be in a better condition

condition than *Socrates* ! is it reasonable to hope, that we should be in a better condition than the best men that ever were born ! than *Job*, and *David*, than the apostles and martyrs, nay than our blessed Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* himself !

But after all, perhaps you valued the opinion of the world too much ; and had more regard in your dealings, to reputation than to right, and were more sollicitous to gain the esteem of others, than the approbation of *GOD*, and a good conscience. If so, you are rightly rewarded. You built upon a false foundation : you knew it to be false. And surely you should not be surpris'd, to find it hath failed you. Or perhaps, tho' you did not deserve reproach, and infamy, in this particular instance ; yet you deserved it in many others, that have escaped the notice of the world. And therefore, *GOD*, for your humiliation, and correction, suffered

suffered you to be reviled at this time, and in this manner. As *David* apprehended, that *Shimei* was appointed of *GOD*, to curse him; not on the score of any present demerit; but in punishment of past guilt. And therefore, you have infinitely more reason to humble your soul before *GOD*, (after *David's* example) in a deep sense of your own unworthiness, than to swell with pride, and disdain of the injury that is done you.

Besides, if you take occasion from hence, to correct your conduct, and order your conversation aright; the innocency, and the integrity of your life, will be a constant refutation of all the calumny that is thrown upon you, and you will have the same consolation, in this case, with which that philosopher was supported, who being told that some people had spoken ill of him, answered, with a grave unconcern; that he would take

care to live so, as that nobody should believe them.

Again you are disappointed, and crossed, in your hopes, and purposes. You proposed infinite advantage and satisfaction, in the success of this, or that project, or purpose of life. And now you fret, and repine, because they have all failed you. But consider, I beseech you, did you not know from the first, that the events of all your hopes and designs, of all your purposes, and pursuits, were uncertain? that every thing in this world, is subject to a thousand casualties, and calamities! did you not foresee a possibility of your miscarrying, from the iniquity, or partiality of those you had to deal with, from your own weakness, and vanity; or the vanity of the things without you? and if you did, why were you not prepared to receive, what, in the ordinary train of things, must naturally come to pass; and of consequence,

sequence, what you should naturally expect, might happen. Consider seriously, did you refer this affair, to the disposal and determination of Almighty God? did you religiously submit your hopes, and purposes, to the over-ruling wisdom of providence? if you did, why do you not acquiesce in it? can any thing be, at once, more impious, or more absurd, than to commit your concerns, to the direction of an Almighty, infinitely wise, and good, and just being; and after that, repine, and be discontented, because he hath not determined, or disposed of them, in this or that particular manner! that is in reality, to repine, that he hath not disposed, or determined of them, as well, and as wisely, as you could!

But on the other hand, if you did not commit your affairs to the care, and direction of providence, can you be surpris'd that you are disappointed? do you not suffer the just re-

ward of your vain presumption, and irreligious rashness? instead therefore of lamenting your misfortune, bewail your folly, and impiety. And make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.

But after all, what have you lost by this disappointment? you have lost, perhaps, your labour, and care; and how much had you been happier, and better, if you had sat down useless, and unemployed, the whole time? how do you know, into what dangerous mischiefs, that great parent of evil idleness, would have thrown you, if you had not been thus employed! or suppose you had turned your industry, and your endeavours, another way; can you take upon you, to say, you had certainly been more successful? or if you had, can you tell, what had been the issue of that success? how many men have been utterly ruined, and undone, by
their

their good fortune! by the success of their warmest wishes! and most earnest pursuits.

But perhaps you have lost not only your time, but your fortune also. It may be so; but then in lieu of that, you have gained experience, and in experience, wisdom. And wisdom is incomparably a greater good, than wealth. Wisdom is the noblest acquisition of life, and labour! consider moreover, that this, which you call a misfortune, hath given you an opportunity, of exercising patience, and resignation, and equanimity. Virtues, which probably you stood in great need of. And yet, otherwise, would perhaps have had no opportunity of exercising, to your advantage. Whereas, if you have thus improved your loss, you are an immense gainer by it: and far from having any reason to repine you have in truth reason to

D d 3

rejoice,

rejoice, and to triumph in your misfortune.

But besides all this, consider, was not that wealth which you have now lost, some way or other an occasion of sin to you? or that hope, upon which you built, some way or other a foundation of vanity! did they not inspire you with pride, and arrogance? did they not make you neglect God? did you not trust too much in the mammon of unrighteousness! did it not administer fuel to some of your corrupt inclinations, and passions! if it did this, you are well rid of it. You lost your earthly hopes but you have secured your eternal happiness. You have lost your wealth but you have saved your soul, and what *would you have been profited if you had gained the whole world, and lost your soul!*

But again: you are robbed, and defrauded, and that too, by those, whom

whom you never exasperated, or injured. In answer to this, hear what a heathen could advise, upon this occasion. Never use yourself, saith *Epicletus*, to say upon any occasion, that you have lost any thing: but that you have restored it. If your wife, or your child die they are returned to the giver: if your estate be taken from you, this too is paid back to the proprietor. (*i. e.*) It is restored to GOD who gave it. But you will say, he is a villain that defrauded me, of this good, or drew this evil upon me: alas! what is that to the purpose; how doth it concern you, by what means, or by what hand, it pleased him who gave the blessing, to take it back! is it reasonable, that we who prescribed not to our great benefactor, the methods, or measures, in which he bestoweth his benefits upon us; should yet take upon us, to quarrel with the manner of his resuming them! if a friend,

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should

should settle an estate upon any of us, with a clause of resumption, ought we to think ourselves injured, whenever he thinks fit to exert his undoubted right, and take it back? should we not rather restore it readily, and with gratitude? it is just so, with the blessings we derive from Almighty God: nothing could be more unjust, than to imagine ourselves the proprietors, as well as the possessors. He bestoweth them, of his bounty, and resumeth them, at his pleasure. And we ought by no means to disquiet ourselves upon the matter: but while he permiteth the enjoyment, use them, as things that are not ours. And such therefore, as we are ready to restore, upon the first demand, with thankfulness: saying with righteous *Job*, *The lord gave and the lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the lord.*

But perhaps you complain with the Psalmist, *it was not an enemy that*

that did me this evil, for then I could have borne it ; but it was mine own familiar friend. The man, from whom, of all others, I least expected, or deserved it ! this indeed, it must be owned, is a very aggravating circumstance. But after all, this misbehaviour of your friends, is infinitely more his calamity, than yours. To be false, and treacherous, is indeed a dreadful reflection. But to be rid of one that was so, is quite otherwise. The loss of a false friend, is only the loss of a great evil. And this, common sense assureth us, we ought rather to rejoice at ! besides this, the satisfaction of your integrity, and fidelity, remaineth still with you ; without any other allay, than that of error and disappointment ; common to the whole race of *Adam* ! your friend is gone, but your fidelity and integrity remain, and fidelity, and integrity, will one day find their reward.

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But above all, be this your steady consolation: that although all the friends upon earth, should forsake you, yet is it in your own power, to make sure of one, that is infinitely preferable to them all! one whose fidelity cannot fail you! who is always able, and ready, to do you all real good! who, in all danger, and difficulty, and distress, can deliver, and protect, and preserve you.

But again, the death of friends is a great grievance to you: this, it must be owned is a fore evil. *Your friend that was as your own soul.* And yet christianity doth not fail to give you great consolation even here. If he was a good man he is with God. Why then do you repine at his happiness? did you not always wish well to him? why then do you now grieve, when he is in the best condition that it is possible for him to be in! you cannot therefore grieve for him: and to grieve for yourself, were a perverse

verse, selfish fondness, inconsistent with the very idea of friendship! for that engageth us, to be always pleased with the felicity of our friends; and to make their happiness our own! if he was an ill man, it is to be hoped he hath repented, and made his peace with G O D. However, we are at least to be thankful, that it hath pleased G O D, to cut off the progress of his wickedness: and deliver him from greater condemnation! that he hath removed him, from the temptations, and allurements, of a wicked world, that were too powerful for him.

But still it may be urged, that although some consolation may be drawn in this case, from the considerations of another life, and the goodness, and mercy of G O D. Yet still the death of a true friend, is so grievous an evil, that human nature may well be allowed to lament so great a calamity. Why then, let nature

nature have its course. Let our friends be mourned, but not immoderately. And let us, by no means, *sorrow as men without hope*. We know, that if we and our friends are good christians we are only parted for a season ! we are divided upon earth ; but we shall meet again in heaven. Never more to be separated, or disquieted, or disappointed. But if our friends were not so good as might be wished, yet still if we ourselves continue in the ways of righteousness, and salvation ; we have this solid consolation ; that although they are lost to us in this world, that loss will in another world, be abundantly made up to us, by the society of angels, and archangels, and the blessed spirits of good men made perfect ! and in the mean time, though we should be robbed of all our earthly associates. Yet our best friend, still remaineth with us : nor can we without our own fault, lose the presence, the protection, the favour of Almighty

Almighty GOD; who is immortal, and immutable. And can never be separated from us, but by sin, and impenitence.

And thus we see the many strong and unanswerable arguments for contentment, drawn from reason and religion. But chiefly from religion. From the knowledge of the providence, wisdom, and goodness of GOD; and the rewards of a future life, revealed in the gospel. We now see to a demonstration, what the great heathen *Socrates* long since taught; that no evil can possibly befall a good man. Forasmuch, as faith in the promises of GOD, and an humble submission to his holy will, cannot fail to alleviate all the calamities of this life. And what is yet more, to turn them into greater blessings. Philosophy could go no farther, than to teach us to bear afflictions patiently. But christianity hath enabled us to rejoice in them, and

and to triumph over them. Forasmuch, as we are assured, that if we bear them as we ought; *these light afflictions which are but for a moment; shall work for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.*

If we consider aright, we shall find, that most of the calamities we complain of, are not real, but comparative. And that those which are real, have many great advantages to compensate their inconveniencies, even in this world. But rightly used, are sure pledges of life, and immortality, in that which is to come.

And now my brethren, what can possibly come recommended to us by higher, and nobler advantages; than this virtue, this truly christian and divine virtue of contentment? and indeed what could we even wish more desirable in any blessing, than this. That no condition of life can be miserable with it; and none happy without it! that it hath the di-

vine power to alleviate all the evils of this life, and insure all the beatitudes of the next! it is peace in the possession, and heaven in the prospect! nay it is indeed another heaven, here on earth! it is the voice of God within us! filling us with glory and immortality! and giving us a sure earnest of *that fulness of joy, which floweth from the presence of God upon the blessed in heaven for evermore, which God, &c.*

F I N I S.

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